

CLÉRIA

A TALE.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

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Our Passions gone, and Reason on her throne,
Amaz'd we see the mischiefs we have done:
After a tempest, when the winds are laid,
The calm sea wonders at the wrecks it made.

WALLER:

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED AT THE
Minerva-Press,
FOR WILLIAM LANE, LEADENHALL-STREET.
1798.



Charlotte Marica

CLERMONT.

CHAP. I.

Witness ye Pow'rs
How much I suffer'd, and how much I strove.

DRYDEN.

THE evening was far advanced when Madeline went upon the lawn. It was now the dusky hour of twilight, when the glow worm "gan to light his pale and ineffectual fires" amongst the tangled thickets of the forest, and the vespers of the birds and the toils of the woodman had ceased. The beetle had now commenced its droning

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flight, and the owlet her sad song from the ivy mantled turrets of the castle, intermingled, or rather lost at times, in the hoarse and melancholy cries of waterfowl returning to the little islands on the lake, across which came the hollow sound of a distant convent bell.

Madeline stood some minutes upon the lawn as if to enjoy sounds, which by soothing, soothed the dejection of her mind ; but the kind of pleasing trance into which they lulled her, was of short continuance ; all the perturbed thoughts which anxiety and attention about the Countess had, during the day, in some degree dissipated, soon returned with full power ; and as she cast her eyes on the bleak and distant mountains, fancy, torturing fancy presented de Sevignie to her view, a sad and solitary wanderer about them. His head unsheltered, exposed to the unwholesome dews of night ; his ideas unsettled, perhaps wandering after her, who like himself was a child of sorrow.

Wrapt in melancholy meditation, heedless almost whither or how far she went, she now wandered down a lonely and romantic path, which led along the margin of a lake to a stupenduous mountain that terminated it : in this mountain were numerous cavities, some of which had been formed into agreeable summer retreats by the Count and Countess de Merville ; the foremost of these was a spacious grotto, whose sides and roof were formed of rugged stone, ornamented by beautiful crystalline substances, which sparkled in the rays of the sun, that sometimes pierced through crevices in the roof like the finest brilliants ; its floor consisted of smooth pebbles curiously inlaid, and its arched entrance was nearly overgrown by a thick foilage of ivy, whose dark green was enlivened by the bright tints of several wild flowers ; while thick around the myrtle, the laurestine, and the arbutus, reared high their beauteous and fragrant heads, stretching their fantastic arms through its crevices : immediately above

them rose a wood of solemn verdure, which reached half way up the ascent; the rest of the mountain was rocky and bare of vegetation. The beauty and sweetness of the shrubs; the lovely prospect it commanded of the lake and skirting woods, and the solemn shadows cast upon it by the trees above, rendered the grotto a delightful place for retirement.

In shady Bower,
More sacred or sequester'd tho' but feign'd.
Pan or Sylvanus never slept, nor Nymph,
Nor Fauns haunted.

From this cavity, through an irregular but not inelegant arch, formed by a chasm in the rock, was an entrance into another, in the centre of which a deep and spacious bath had been contrived many years back, which was constantly supplied by the cold limpid streams of the mountain; this bath, like the grotto, received its only light from apertures in the roof, from whence wild shrubs hung in fantastic wreaths; and about it were smaller caves that answered the purpose

pose of little dressing-rooms ; but those caves, the bath, and grotto, had been long neglected : for since the death of the Count, who had constantly resorted to them for health and pleasure, the Countess had never been able to bear the idea of approaching them. Her desertion confirmed the superstitious stories, which had long been in circulation amongst the servants and peasantry, of their being haunted by some of the former inhabitants of the chateau ; nor would one of them venture near the mountain after sun-set, for almost any consideration.

Hither, as I have already said, Madeline now wandered, almost without knowing whether she was going ; but when she found herself at the grotto, feeling a little fatigued, she sat down upon a moss covered stone at its entrance ; the present scene was perfectly adapted to her feelings, and like the poet she might have said,

Those

Those woods, those wilds, those melancholy glooms
Accord with my soul's sadness, and draw forth
The voice of sorrow from my bursting heart.

The grotto behind her was now involved in utter darkness, and the lake, which lay before her, tinged with the gloom of closing day, appeared black and dismal ; except where it reflected one of the beautifully chequered clouds of evening, or the scattered stars that alternately glittered and disappeared : as if unwilling to disturb the silence of the hour, it stole with gentle undulations to its green banks ; and no sounds, but those of its soft murmurs, the melancholy rippling of the water within the grotto, and now and then a hoarse scream from a wild-fowl on the lake, could be distinguished.

The thoughts of Madeline were therefore not interrupted ; and fancy again represented de Sevignie rambling about the gloomy heights, whose outlines she could just discover : She shuddered at the idea of
the

the dangers to which such conduct exposed him.

“ Oh, de Sevignie! (she cried aloud, speaking in the agitation of her soul,) would to Heaven we had never met, since by meeting, we have only become sources of wretchedness to each other; painful as is our separation, that pain to me would be mitigated, did I know you were in any degree happy; but while I imagine you miserable, peace must continue a stranger to my breast.”

She paused, for at this instant a deep sigh, from the innermost recesses of the grotto, pierced her ear, and made her start with terror from her seat. Though she had early been taught to contemn the weakness which gives rise to superstition; and, though in the hour of composure she derided it, yet there were moments when her spirits where exhausted, such a moment as the present, in which it found admission to her breast.

Every fearful story, which she had heard of the grotto and other caves of the mountain, now recurred to her memory, and she almost feared the spectres they described would start to her view; for of a human creature being in the grotto at an hour of darkness, such as the present she had not an idea, from the dread she knew entertained of it. She was hastening away as fast as her trembling limbs could carry her, when the sound of an approaching step took from her all power of motion, and she sunk to the earth in an agony of fear; almost instantly, however, she was snatched from it, while a voice to which her heart vibrated, the soft the tremulous voice of de Sevignie, assured her of her safety.

“ Madeline! (he exclaimed, while he prest her to his throbbing heart) my Madeline! can you forgive the terror I involuntary caused you.”

“ Good heaven! (said Madeline, raising her head from his shoulder) do I really behold, (as if doubting the evidence of her ears,

ears, and eyes,) do I really behold de Sevignie,—why (she continued) why, for what purpose did you come hither.”

“ Ah, Madeline ! (he said) “ cannot your own heart inform you ; have you no idea of the sympathy which drew me hither, to wander round the mansion you inhabit ; to indulge my feelings by treading, or fancying I trod, in the paths you frequented. Oh, Madeline ! what to happiness would be trifles, are to sorrow and despair matters of importance.

While he spoke, the tremors of Madeline had somewhat subsided ; but emotions different from those of fear, though not less painful, still agitated her mind ; emotions which delicacy, dissatisfied with itself, had given rise to ; she did not desire, nor ever had attempted to conceal her friendship for de Sevignie, but situated as they were, she did not wish him by any means to know, it was of so fervent a nature as her expressions in the grotto must have implied ; and

overwhelmed with confusion at the idea of them, she endeavoured, as soon as she could move, to disengage herself from his arms, in order to return home.

“ Against your inclination I will not detain you, (said he) and yet (contradicting his words by still holding her to his breast) to part with you so soon, at such a moment as this, is more almost than I can bear ; oh Madeline ! to affect ignorance of what you said in the grotto, would be to betray insensibility ; I have heard you (he continued, with a voice of rapture) I have heard you in accents which pity might acknowledge her’s, pronounce my name. Think then, Madeline, and excuse my doing so, whether at a moment which has given me the sweet assurance of being sometimes thought of, sometimes pitied by you, I can without the utmost reluctance let you depart immediately.”

“ You have heard me, de Sevignie (cried Madeline, trying to speak in a collected voice,)

voice,) but on your honour, on your delicacy I rest, to bury in oblivion what you heard."

"In my heart eternally, (said de Sevignie.)"

"You must promise to forget it, (proceeded Madeline) that I may try to be reconciled to myself."

"Forget! (repeated de Sevignie) no Madeline, never will I give a promise which my heart protests against fulfilling; the memory of what I have heard I will cherish; I will treasure, as all that can give pleasure to my existence; in all my wanderings, amidst all my cares, I will recur to it for comfort and support; for never can I feel quite forlorn, never utterly miserable, while I imagine I am regarded, I am thought of by you."

Madeline sighed, and averted her eyes from his, in order to conceal the feelings his language excited. Reason opposed a longer continuance with him, by convincing her a lengthened conversation would only add to

her subsequent anguish when they parted : but her heart recoiled from the idea of quitting him so soon, so abruptly, when perhaps they might never meet again ; she wished too, to stay a few minutes longer, to caution him against the dangers which his wild and solitary rambles exposed him to.

For this purpose, after a little irresolution, she ceased to make an effort to leave him, and opened her lips but her voice faltered ; and she felt that she could not express her apprehensions for his safety, without betraying the tender interest she took in it. Suddenly, therefore, she broke from him and moved on.

For a minute he stood transfixed to the spot where she had left him ; then starting, he exclaimed thus, “ thus, do I ever find my happiness transient ! oh, how exquisite was that, which but a few moments ago pervaded my soul at the idea of your pity ;—a pity, which your abrupt departure convinces
me

me you either wish to disavow or suppress."

" Alas ! (cried Madeline, involuntarily pausing, and turning to him) of what avail would be my pity."

" Oh, it would sooth my cares ; it would assuage my sorrows : Repeat, then, my Madeline, repeat the sweet assurance of it, and spare a few minutes longer to wretchedness and me."

" No, (said Madeline, who ashamed of her past weakness resolved to give no farther proof of it,) it grows late, and I must quit this place ; to continue much longer here, would, I am convinced, occasion a search after me, and consequently might subject me to the reproach of carrying on clandestine proceedings."

" Go, then, Madam ! (exclaimed de Sevignie, in passionate accents) go, Madam ! obey the rigid rules of propriety, and disregard my sufferings ; sufferings, which you yourself have caused. Yes, Madeline, 'tis on your account my youth is wasted,

wasted, my hopes o'erthrown, my comforts blasted : but go—no assurance of pity now would sooth me ; for I am now convinced, what you feel for me is not a settled feeling, but a mere involuntary impulse, such as any son of sorrow may equally excite.”

He turned abruptly from her, and with quick, yet tottering steps hastened to the grotto, against whose side he suddenly flung himself, as if for support.

At another time to be accused of insensibility might well have inspired Madeline with resentment ; but now she could only feel compassion and tenderness for him, whose pale and disordered looks gave such melancholy evidence of his sufferings. Not more affected by his words, than terrified by his manner, to depart without seeing him in some degree composed, was impossible, and she walked slowly towards him, trusting, that at her approach he would rise, and that
she

she might then be able to prevail on him to quit the Forest. He did not move however, and after standing a few minutes by him she ventured softly to pronounce his name. Still he continued silent and motionless, and her alarm increased; she stooped down, but could not hear him breathe,—his hand lay extended from him, she gently raised it, but almost immediately let it drop with horror at finding it cold and lifeless.

He was dying perhaps, and she had not power to assist him. “Oh, de Sevignie! (she exclaimed, in the agony of her soul) de Sevignie! speak to me for heaven’s sake, or I shall sink with terror.”

He started, as if the vehemence of her words had roused him; turned and surveyed her for a minute with a vacant eye. His recollection then returned, and with it all his gentleness.

“I have

“ I have been ill, (he said) extremely ill ; I never was so disordered before, but 'tis the effect of weakness ; this is the first day I have been able to come out since we last parted.”

“ Good heavens ! (cried Madeline) “ what imprudence to come hither ; oh, de Sevignie, what can make you act in a manner so injurious to yourself, so distressing to your friends.”

The energy of her voice, the paleness, the wildness of her countenance, proved to de Sevignie the alarm he had given her.

“ Ah, Madeline, (said he, taking her soft trembling hand in his,) I seem fated to give you uneasiness ; but be composed I beseech you, and also be assured, I never more will intrude into your presence ;—tomorrow, I leave V—— for ever. Too long indeed have I persecuted you ; I blush at the recollection of my impetuous conduct ; to apologize for it as I wish is impossible ; but
never,

never, never, shall I cease to regret it. Permit me, (he added) to leave you near the house, the way to it is solitary, I will then depart."

"No, (replied Madeline) there is no danger in my going alone; besides, if I permitted you to accompany me, I should bring you out of your way; for this path near the grotto is the shortest one to the road."

"Farewell, then (cried he, pressing her hand to his cold lips,) farewell, (he repeated as he resigned it,) but as this is the last time we shall probably ever meet, let me have the comfort of hearing from you, that you do not utterly detest me for the uneasiness I have caused you."

Madeline attempted to speak, but her voice was lost in the emotions of her soul, and she hung her head to conceal the tears which trickled down her cheeks. They did not, however, escape the penetrating eyes of de Sevignie: he again took her hand, "I cannot leave you, (said he) "in this situation,

situation ; you weep, you tremble ; oh, my Madeline, rest upon me."

" No ! (cried she, resisting the effort he made to support her) I am now better ; let us therefore part, and part for ever."

De Sevignie repeated the word, then yielding, or rather overcome by the anguish of his heart, he fell at her feet ; he implored the choicest blessings of heaven for her ; he besought her forgiveness for the rashness, the impetuosity of his conduct. " The remembrance of such forgiveness may at some future period (he continued) a little alleviate the pain of separation."

How unnecessary for Madeline to assure him by words, of that forgiveness which her looks expressed ; with streaming eyes she hung over him ; yet not their separation alone caused her tears. His broken health and spirits were subjects of yet greater regret, and scarcely,—scarcely could she prevent herself from kneeling on the earth beside him, and supplicating that heaven he had so recently

recently addrest on her account to restore them ; but though the supplication did not burst from her lips, it was breathed from the very depth of her heart.

In a moment of agitation like the present, the feelings of that heart could no longer be suppressed, and de Sevignie now beheld the strong hold he had of its affections.

But the confirmation of her affection could not lessen his wretchedness, on the contrary, it seemed to encrease it : He arose from her feet.

“ Oh, Madeline ! (he said) how inconsistent is the human heart ; but a few minutes ago, and I fancied the assurance of your pity and regard would render me in some degree happy ; now when you have permitted me to receive it, I feel myself more miserable than ever, and think, since the obstacles to our union cannot be conquered, I should have been less so had I still imagined you indifferent.”

Madeline

Madeline shuddered, " would to heaven ! (cried she, emphatically) we had never met." Scarcely was she able to forbear asking what those obstacles were which he alluded to, but propriety checked the question ; she regretted bitterly, regretted the divulgement of her sentiments, and the consciousness of its being an unpremeditated divulgement, could scarcely mitigate her regret for it ; anxious to avoid the imputation of total weakness, either from de Sevignie or herself, she now summoned all her resolution to her aid, and after the silence of a few minutes, addressd him in a collected voice.

" Let us (said she) endeavour to reconcile ourselves to an inevitable necessity, the efforts of fortitude and virtue can never fail of being successful, and how can they be more nobly exercised, then in trying to repel useless sorrow. Let us from this moment, that no interruption may be given to such efforts, determine sedulously to avoid each other."

" Yet we shall meet again ; (exclaimed de Sevignie in a passionate accent, and grasping

ing her hand) our souls were originally paired in heaven ; and though now separated by a wayward destiny, they will, my Madeline, be re-united in that heaven."

A tear, in spite of her efforts to restrain it, strayed down her pale cheek, but she wiped it hastily away. "'Ere we part for ever in this world, (she proceeded with a softness she could not repress) let me entreat you, de Sevignie, to exert that fortitude, which from reason, from education, from principle, you ought, nay you must if you please, be master of. 'Tis an injustice to yourself, to society ; above all, to that divine Being who implanted such noble faculties in your mind as I know you to possess, to let them be destroyed by sorrow ; besides, what grief must not the conduct which impairs your health and weakens your mind, give to all your connections."

" My connections ! (repeated de Sevignie, looking steadily at her) my connections ;" and his eye loured on her.

" Yes,

“ Yes, (replied Madeline) to your connections, if their feelings are at all like mine. Oh, de Sevignie ! if you really regard my tranquility, promise, ere we part, to try and conquer your dejection, and to give up your solitary rambles; the idea of the dangers to which you expose yourself by them terrifies me.”

“ Ere we part, (said de Sevignie, who seemed only to have attended to those words) Oh ! what a death-like chill comes over my heart at the idea of doing so. Never—never, Madeline, if honour, if gratitude permitted, would we separate.”

“ If they are combined against us (cried Madeline) it were not only foolish but criminal to think of acting otherwise than we are now doing.”

“ They are ! (exclaimed de Sevignie) for would it not be dishonourable, ungrateful in the extreme, to attempt leading the daughter of Clermont—he to whose compassionate care, under heaven, I perhaps owe the preservation of my life ; would it not, I say,

say, be base, to attempt leading her from ease, security, the enjoyment of all that affluence can give, into care, danger, and obscurity. No, Madeline, I am not selfish; I am not a villain: I would not, for the mere gratification of my own passion, involve the woman I adore in trouble; nor should I gratify it by such conduct:—that storm which I could brave alone, I should sink beneath with her.”

The obstacles which he had alluded to, seemed now explained: from fortune, want of fortune, Madeline was convinced they sprung. Charmed by the noble, the generous conduct of de Seignie; ignorant of the difficulties and sorrows of life, when unpossessed of a competence; and believing, firmly believing, that her attachment for him could never be conquered, she was almost tempted to offer him her hand. To assure him ease, security, the enjoyment of all that affluence could give, would gladly be relinquished by her for the sake of sharing his
cares,

cares, dangers, and obscurity; but delicacy, that celestial guardian of her sex, checked the rash impulse of romantic tenderness. She suddenly recollected herself, and recoiled, from the idea of the action she had been about committing, as if from a precipice.

“Gracious heaven! (she exclaimed within herself) how mean how despicable should I have appeared in his eyes, who can so nobly triumph over his own passion. Had I followed the impulse of mine, and offered my hand unsolicited, unsanctified, by the approbation of a parent or a friend. Ah, Madeline, you may well blush for your weakness.”

Lest she should betray that weakness, she determined not to stay another minute with him, and bidding him a hasty adieu, she walked on. De Sevignie in a few minutes followed her, but he continued many by her side, ere he again spoke to her; at last he stooped, and taking her hand to detain her—

“Madeline

“ Madeline, (said he, as if hitherto absorbed in profound meditation,) do you think, if I could render my situation more prosperous than it at present is, that your friends, if you had the generosity to desire it, would permit our union.”

“ I do (cried Madeline, hesitating, yet not able to repress this acknowledgement of tenderness,) “ I think they would not oppose what would contribute to my happiness.”

A sudden smile, the smile of rapture, illumined the countenance of de Sevignie ; he clasped her hands in his ; he raised them to heaven.—“ Oh, what transport ! (he said) to be able to contribute to your happiness ; grant, heavenly powers, such blessedness may yet be mine ! May I detain you Madeline, a few minutes longer to acquaint you with the plan, which I have just conceived, for conquering the obstacles that at present impede our wishes.” Madeline could not reply in the negative, and de Sevignie began :

“ To another”—said he.

At this instant an approaching step was heard, and in the next, the shrill voice of Floretta, calling upon Madeline.

Provoked by this interruption, de Sevignie attempted to lead Madeline amongst the trees which bordered the path ; but though as much disappointed as he could be, she resisted the effort.

“ No, (said she) “ I cannot go, 'tis the Countess, I am convinced, that has sent after me, and she would be terrified if I could not be found ; besides if her servant discovered me trying to avoid her, what might she not say. Some other time must do for the explanation which you were about giving, and which I will confess, you could scarcely be more anxious to utter than I to hear.”

“ What time, (asked de Sevignie) “ I shall be all impatience, all suspense, till we meet again ; to-morrow evening you may surely come hither.”

“ Perhaps,

"Perhaps," said Madeline.

"No perhaps, (cried de Sevignie) you must give me a positive answer."

"Well then, you may be confident, if in my power I will come."

"Adieu, then," cried he; again pressing her hand to his lips, then suddenly darting into the nearest path, he was out of sight in a moment.

Madeline paused on the spot where he had left her, to reflect on all that he had said, and congratulate herself on the prospect of felicity which was now opening to her view.

Her pleasing meditation was soon, however, interrupted by the appearance of Floretta. "Well, I am sure, (cried she,) I am glad I have found you. Lord bless my soul, Mam'selle, how can you venture into such lonely places by yourself. I am sure nothing but compulsion could make me do so."

"I hope none has been used to night,"

said Madeline, as she proceeded with her towards the chateau.

“ That there has, indeed, nothing but the absolute commands of my Lady could have made me come hither ; I wonder, I am sure, what could make her fix on me to look for you. She might have known it was not proper to send any girl by herself into such wild places.”

“ Your Lady knew there was no danger, (said Madeline,) as none but her own peasants and servants are about them.”

“ Why, I don't say Mam'selle, there is any danger of meeting thieves, but there is of meeting much worse. Ah, Mam'selle, you know well enough what I mean ; and you must be either very incredulous or very hardy, to venture near the grotto, after the horrid stories you have heard in the chateau about it ; besides those stories, I could tell you others of it, which if you heard, would frighten you so much, that I dare say you would not be able to move.”

“ If

“ If you think they would have that effect upon me, pray don't tell them at present, (said Madeline,) for I want to make haste to the chateau.”

“ Indeed I don't intend to do so, (cried Floretta,) the very telling them would frighten me, and I am sure I am sufficiently terrified already.”

“ Why did you not get some one to accompany you, (asked Madeline.)

“ A likely thing indeed, that any one would accompany me in the dark to such places ; not but I tried, I can assure you. The butler was the first I asked ; but no truly, he was getting his knives and spoons ready for supper. Then I entreated Mr. Jacques, the coachman, but he was just going to visit the horses ; and as to the footmen, I know I might as well try to bring the pillars of the hall along with me. I tried the maids also, but one was going to settle the chambers, and another wanted to help the cook to get supper ready ; and another—but in short they had all some frivolous excuse or other.”

“ Well, (said Madeline,) “ though you did come alone, you met with nothing to frighten you.”

“ That shall never prevail on me, however, to venture again to such a place by myself, if I can help it.”

By this time they had reached the chateau, and Madeline being informed by a servant, whom she met in the hall, that the Countess was in the supper parlour, directly repaired thither.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Let my tears thank you, for I cannot speak,

————— And if I could,

Words were not made to vent such thoughts as mine.

DRYDEN.

“ YOU have taken a long walk to night,
my dear, (said the Countess, as she
entered,) I really was beginning to grow a
little uneasy.”

“ I am concerned I caused you any unea-
siness, Madam, (cried Madeline,) “ I hope
you will forgive my doing so. I shall take
care in future not to stay out so late.”

The Countess answered her with her usual gracious sweetness, and they both sat down to supper, which was served immediately after her return.

The revived hopes of Madeline had re-animated her countenance with all its usual vivacity. The glow upon her cheek, the lustre of her eye, the smile that played about her mouth; the ready cheerfulness with which she entered into conversation, and the unusual length of her walk; altogether contributed to convince the penetrating mind of the Countess, that in this walk, something uncommonly interesting had occurred; and what she believed that something to be, may easily be imagined. Considering Madeline as she did,—a sacred deposit, and exclusive of that consideration, deeply interested about her from her innocence and sweetness, she deemed it absolutely necessary, to enquire into what had past in the interview, which she was convinced had taken place between her and de Sevignie.

Sevignie. Well knowing that the eager eye of youth and passion, too often overlooks those dangers, which strike the cooler and more experienced one of age.

“ Your walk to night, my dear Madeline, (said she with a smile, after the things were removed and the servants withdrawn) was as pleasant, I hope, as it was long.”

Her smile, and the expressive glance which accompanied it, assured the conscious heart of Madeline, that the Countess suspected it had not been a solitary one ; and her face was immediately crimsoned over : yet Madeline never had an idea of carrying on any proceedings against the knowledge of the Countess. She had determined within her own mind, the moment she was acquainted with the plan of de Sevignie, to unfold to her every circumstance, every hope, relative to him. The reason therefore of her present agitation, was a fear, that a premature discovery might make the Countess imagine

she had meant to carry on a clandestine correspondence, and, consequently lessen her in her esteem.

“ I see, Madam, (said she, after the pause of a minute, bashfully raising her eyes from the ground) I see that you suspect something, and I acknowledge you are right in doing so; but oh! dearest madam, do not think me ungrateful, do not deem me imprudent, do not suppose to chance alone you owe the discovery of my thoughts or situation; I only deferred acquainting you with both; I only delayed opening my heart to your view, till I had something more satisfactory than at present to inform you of.”

“ Unbosom it now, (said the Countess) “ and trust me, my dear Madeline, I would not desire the communication, did I not mean to take as great an interest in your affairs as a parent would. Unbosom your heart to me as to a Mother; and be assured, if my advice, my assistance, my friendship, can

can in any degree forward your happiness, I shall derive real satisfaction myself from doing so."

Thus kindly urged, Madeline rather rejoiced than regretted being surprised into the relation ; for she had long sighed, though withheld by diffidence from desiring it ; for the counsel of a person more conversant, more experienced than herself in the intricacies of the human heart. To elucidate every circumstance which had happened in her interview with de Sevignie, it was requisite to mention those which had past at V——.

She began, but it was with the involuntary hesitation of modesty ; and from the same impulse she tried to pass over, as lightly as possible, the pain she had experienced on de Sevignie's account ; but though her language might be unimpassioned, her looks plainly indicated what her sufferings had been.

Her relation ended, the Countess sat many minutes without speaking, as if absorbed in profound meditation. She then broke the silence, by thanking Madeline with the most gracious benignancy for the confidence she had reposed in her.

“ Your narrative, my dear Madeline, (she cried) “ confirms the opinion I entertained, since the evening I saw you together, of the strength of your attachment for de Sevignie;—nay, do not be confused, my dear; love, excited by merit, we have no reason to be ashamed of.

“ It will please you, no doubt, to hear, that I think his attachment as tender as your own; but it is one, with which his reason is evidently at variance. Why it is so, the latter part of his conversation this evening seems to me to explain. A distressed situation has hitherto pointed out the necessity of his trying to conquer his passion; but I own it appears to me strange and mysterious that a man of his elegant appearance

ance and enlightened education, should be in narrow circumstances and obscurity. If however, he can properly account for this obscurity and want of fortune ; if the one proceeds neither from ignoble birth nor dishonourable conduct ; and the other from no idle extravagance, no degrading folly, we will not wait for the realization of his plan, be it what it may, to realize his happiness. You are perhaps surprised (she continued) to hear me speak in this positive manner, as if I had an absolute power to dispose of you ; but know my dear, that in me your father vested such a power. As soon as I understood your situation with regard to de Sevignie, I communicated to him all I thought concerning it, and requested his advice ; he answered me immediately, and begged in future, I might never apply to him on the subject, but depend entirely on my own judgment ; he entreated me to do this, he said, from a firm conviction that I would watch over you with as much solicitude and scarcely less tenderness than he would himself,

himself. His confidence was not, I trust, misplaced."

Madeline would have spoken in the fullness of her heart, but the Countess motioned her to silence.

"To contribute (she resumed) to the happiness of his child, will, as I have already said, impart the truest satisfaction to me; should we therefore, receive from de Sevignie the satisfactory explanation we desire, I shall immediately give to the adopted daughter of my care, that portion, which from the first moment I took her under my protection, I designed for her; a portion, which though not sufficient to purchase her all the luxuries, is amply so to procure her all the comforts of life; and, to a soul gentle and unassuming as is my Madeline's, those comforts will, I think, yield more real felicity than all its luxuries or dissipations could do. Should the little portion I can give her, be a means of procuring for her
that

that felicity which she deserves and I wish her ;—blessed—thrice blessed, shall I consider the wealth consecrated to such a purpose.”

She stooped, overcome by her own energy ; Madeline was many minutes before she could speak ; but she took the hand of her benefactress, she prest it to her quivering lip, her heaving heart, and dropt upon it tears of gratitude, affection, and esteem.

“ Oh, Madam ! (she at length exclaimed) well might you bid me unbosom my heart to you as to a mother ; sure, had I been blest with one, I could not have experienced more tenderness ; language is poor, is inadequate to express my feelings.”

“ Then do not attempt expressing them, (said the Countess, with her usual benignant smile) but let us resume our, to you to be sure, very uninteresting) conversation. You say, to-morrow evening you promised to meet de Sevignie.”

“ Yes,

“ Yes, Madam, (replied Madeline) with some little hesitation.”

“ Inform him then, (continued the Countess) that you have made me your confidant, also what I said concerning him, and my intentions ; if he can give the required explanation ; but remember Madeline, you tell him, that it must be an explanation so clear,—so full, that not a shadow of doubt shall remain after it ; that, except every thing mysterious is fully elucidated, Madeline Clermont and he, must in future be strangers to each other.”

“ I shall obey you in every respect Madam, (replied Madeline) and indeed (unable to conceal the high opinion she entertained of de Sevignie’s virtues) I have not a doubt but we shall receive as satisfactory an explanation as we could desire.”

“ Heaven grant you may, (cried the Countess) but till you do—till there is some certainty of your being united to de Sevignie, I shall not again mention him to your father, who now imagines from a late letter
of

of mine, that every hope relative to him is over; and I will not undeceive him, except I can do so with pleasure to him and myself."

They soon after this separated for the night; but not to rest did Madeline retire to her chamber: joy is often as wakeful as sorrow; and joy of the most rapturous kind she now experienced; alternately she traversed her apartment, alternately seated herself to repeat all that had past between her and the Countess, to ruminate over her felicity; felicity which now appeared insured; for that de Sevignie could give such an explanation as would rather raise than lessen him in the estimation of her friend, she did not harbour the smallest doubt of.

So sanguine is the youthful heart—so ready to believe that what it wishes will happen. Alas, how doubly sharp does this readiness render the barb of disappointment.

Oh,

Oh, how great was the raptures of Madeline, to think she should be enabled to put de Sevignie in possession of a competency ; every feeling of generosity of sensibility, was gratified by the idea, and she implored the choicest blessings of heaven for the benevolent woman, who had been the means of occasioning her such happiness. “ May heaven (she cried, with uplifted hands) remove from her heart all sorrow, as she removes it from the hearts of others.”

How light was the step—how bright was the eye—how gay was the smile of Madeline when she descended the next morning to the breakfast parlour, where she already found the Countess seated ; the appearance of every thing seemed changed, the awful gloom which had so long pervaded the apartments, was banished ; and in the landscape before the windows Madeline now discovered beauties which had before escaped her notice. The weather had been remarkably fine for some weeks, yet Madeline thought the sun had
not

not shone so bright for many days as on the present.

Such is the magic effect of joy, which, like the touch of an enchanter, can raise a thousand charms around us.

With her friend she took a delightful ride about some of the most delightful parts of the domain after breakfast; and the remainder of the day was past in social converse together.

As soon as twilight began to shroud the earth, the Countess dismissed her to her appointment. "Do you think, Madeline, (cried she with a smile, as she was retiring from the room) it would be amiss if I ordered Jerome to lay an additional plate on the supper table to night."

"Perhaps not, Madam," replied Madeline, blushing. She thought indeed, it was probable that de Sevignie would immediately wish to express his gratitude to the Countess.

CHAP

CHAP. III.

My lab'ring heart, that swells with indignation,
Heaves to discharge its burden, that once done
The busy thing shall rest within its cell.

Rowz.

EXPECTING every moment to behold him, she took the path to the grotto ; but reached it without having that expectation fulfilled. Surprised and disappointed she stopt before it, irresolute whether to return to the chateau directly or wait a few minutes there ; she at last resolved on the latter, and seated herself on the moss covered stone at its entrance. The deep gloom of the grotto made her involuntarily shudder whenever she cast a glance within it,

it, but in spite of terror she continued on her seat, till the dark shades of night began to involve every object, and warned her to return home: as she arose for that purpose an idea darted into her mind, that illness or some dreadful accident, had alone prevented de Sevignie from keeping an appointment so eagerly desired, to tenderly solicited, and regretting the time she had wasted in expectation, she now rather flew than walked to the chateau, in order to entreat the Countess to send a servant to V——, to enquire about him; she had not proceeded many yards, however, when her progress was impeded by the object who had caused her apprehensions and solicitude. So little did she now expect to see him, that as he slowly emerged from amidst the trees, she started back, as if he had been the last creature in the world she had thought of seeing. Ere she could recover sufficiently from her agitation to speak, de Sevignie, rather negligently bowing, said, “ he hoped he had not
been

been the means of keeping her out to so late an hour."

"The officers (continued he, but without looking at her) to whose hospitality and politeness I have been so much indebted, since my residence at V——, insisted on my dining with them to day, and though I wished and tried to leave them at an early hour, they would not suffer me to do so, nor to depart at the one I did, had I not promised to return immediately to them."

The coldness of his manner, the frivolous excuse he made for his want of punctuality, and the intention he avowed of quitting her directly, without any reference to their conversation of the preceeding night, all struck Madeline with a conviction, that his sentiments were totally changed since that conversation had taken place: for a change so sudden, so unaccountable, tenderness suggested an enquiry, but pride repelled it, and she would instantly have quitted him with every indication of the disdain he seemed to merit,

merit, had her agitation permitted her to move."

"Will you allow me, Mademoiselle Clermont (cried de Sevignie, still looking rather from her) to attend you to the castle, 'ere I bid you adieu; and also to hope, that at some other time, I may have the honour of seeing you."

"Never—(said Madeline, recovering her voice, and summoning all her spirits to her aid) never—no sir.—No, de Sevignie, except in the presence or the house of the Countess de Merville, never more will I permit you to see me."

In her house, (repeated de Sevignie with quickness, and turning his eyes upon her.) How could I attempt seeing you in the house of the Countess, unacquainted as I am with her."

The Countess (replied Madeline) would never be displeased at my seeing any one in her house whom I considered as my friend. Besides—besides—(added she, hesitating, doubtful

doubtful whether to stop or to go on) besides—(after the pause of a minute) she gave permission to have you introduced to her.”

“ When, on what account did she give that permission ; (demanded de Sevignie, with yet greater quickness than he had before spoken) did she discover, or, did you tell her that we had met.”

“ I told her. (said Madeline, with firmness, and looking steadily at him) The Countess is my friend ;—she is more. She is the guardian to whose care my father has consigned me, and concealment to her would be criminal. I told her we had met. I told her every circumstance of that meeting ; every circumstance prior to it ; I communicated every thought, I revealed my whole soul.”

“ I admire your prudence, (exclaimed de Sevignie, in an accent which denoted vexation, whilst the melancholy of his countenance gave way to a dark frown, and the paleness of his cheek to a deep crimson.”

“ I rejoice at it, (cried Madeline) my
friend

friend will strengthen my weakness, will confirm my resolves, will give me a clue to discover the dark and intricate mazes of the human heart."

Her language seemed to penetrate the soul of de Sevignie, he turned from her with emotion, then as abruptly turning to her again, "for what purpose (asked he) did the Countess give you permission to introduce me to her."

"For the purpose —" Madeline paused, she had been on the point of saying, for the purpose of promoting our happiness, but timely checked herself. And ah, thought she at the moment, from the altered manner of de Sevignie, I cannot believe that his happiness could be promoted by the intentions of the Countess.

"Tell me, I entreat, I conjure you," said de Sevignie, with earnestness.

Madeline hesitated.—Yet 'tis but justice (she thought) to my friend, to de Sevignie himself, to confess her intentions; if the al-

teration in his manner is occasioned by finding the plan he recently conceived impracticable, the divulgment of her generous intentions will again set all to rights ; catching at this idea, and flattering herself it was a just one, she briefly related the conversation which had past between her and the Countess ; de Sevignie listened with fixed attention, but continued silent many minutes after she had ceased to speak, as if in a profound reverie ; then suddenly raising his eyes from the ground he fastened them on her with an expression of the deepest melancholy, and thus addressd her :

“ Great (cried he) is my regret, greater than language can express, at being unable to avail myself of the high honour the Countess designed me ; but though unable to avail myself of it ; though unable to profit by her noble her generous intentions, my inability to do so, has not suppressd my gratitude for them.

“ Why,

“ Why, why, that inability exists, I cannot explain ; but let me do myself the justice of saying, that candour would not err in putting the most favourable construction on it. In this moment, when declaring the renunciation of every hope relative to you, I would apologize for the presumption, the impetuosity, the inconsistencies of my conduct to you. Could I do so as I wish, but as that is impossible, I must, without pleading for it, cast myself upon the sweetness of your disposition for forgiveness. I often, before this period, declared I would never more intrude into your presence ; I now solemnly repeat that declaration, for I am now thoroughly convinced of the folly of my former conduct, and he who is sensible of his error, yet perseveres in it, is guilty of weakness in the extreme ; such weakness is not mine. In future, I mean to avoid every pursuit, to fly from every thought which can enervate my mind.

His voice faltered, and a deep sigh burst from him. “ Farewell, Mademoiselle

Clermont, (said he, after the pause of a moment) too long have I detained—too long have I persecuted you—with my last adieu receive my best wishes for your happiness, may they be more availing than those I formed for my own.” He cast another lingering look upon her, then turning into a winding path, disappeared in a moment.

Every flattering hope, every pleasing expectation of Madeline’s, was again crushed, without the smallest prospect of their being ever more revived; like the unsubstantial pageants of a dream they faded, nor left a wreck behind. Oh, what a vacuum did their loss occasion in the heart of Madeline: at first, she almost fancied she had dreamt the conversation of the preceeding night, and that it was only now, the illusions of that dream were flying from her. But by degrees, her thoughts grew more composed, and then every wild or soothing suggestion of fancy died away, and she began to reconsider the conduct of de Sevignie. His last words had not been able to make her think
favourably

favourably of it. “ No, (she cried) I am convinced, without some motive for doing so, which he durst not avow, he never would have with-held the confidence he was so kindly invited to repose in the most amiable of women. And yet—(she continued, after pausing some minutes) he with-held it, perhaps, not from having any improper motives to make him wish concealment, but because his sentiments were altered respecting me.— Though no, (she proceeded, after another pause) that could not be the case ; ’tis impossible in one night so great an alteration could have taken place. ’Tis evident then, too evident, that a cause exists for concealment, which he either fears or is ashamed to acknowledge ; and also, that his coldness this evening, sprung from a wish of trying his power over me, for they say neglect is the test of affection ;—but de Sevignie, your artifice caused you no triumph, and never— never more, shall you have an opportunity of exercising it on me ; like you, I will in
future

future avoid every pursuit, fly from every thought which can enervate my mind."

The striking of the castle clock now reached her ear, and she hastily walked to the chateau; alarmed on finding the usual supper hour over, lest she should by her long stay, have again given uneasiness to the bosom of her friend.

On reaching the chateau, a servant informed her, that the Countess was in her dressing-room: slowly Madeline ascended to it; she felt ready to sink with confusion at the idea of the mortifying explanation she must make to the Countess. "She will think (cried she) that I have hitherto been the dupe of my own fancy; and that de Sevignie, but in my own imagination, has been amiable." She paused at the door for a minute, from a vain hope that by so doing, she should regain some composure.

"Well, (said her friend, smiling as she entered) I find, Madeline, by your long stay,
that

that you could not withstand the pleasures of a tête-a-tête ; but where is the Chevalier de Sevignie, (she continued, on seeing Madeline shut the door) were you afraid to bring him, lest I should rival you."

" He is gone, Madam, (answered Madeline, in a faint voice, as she sat down on the nearest chair, unable any longer to support herself.

" Gone ! (repeated the Countess, in a tone of amazement) but bless me, my dear, you look very pale, are you ill."

" No madam," Madeline attempted to say, but her voice failed her, and she burst into tears.

" Gracious heaven ! (exclaimed the Countess, rising, and going to her,) you terrify me beyond expression. Madeline, my love, what is the matter."

" Nothing, madam, (replied Madeline) only, only, (sobbing as if her heart would break) that I think, I believe—the Chevalier de Sevignie, is not quite so amiable as I once imagined."

“ Try to compose yourself and speak intelligibly my dear, (said the Countess) for I cannot support, much longer, the fears you excite.” The tears she shed somewhat relieved the full heart of Madeline ; and the Countess taking a seat by her, she was able in a few minutes, to relate the conduct of de Sevignie, and acknowledge the sentiments it had inspired her with.

“ His behaviour is strange, is inexplicable, indeed (said the Countess) and I perfectly agree with you in thinking, that he is an unworthy character ; too undeserving to have an effort made to solve the mystery which he has wrapt himself in ; had he any sensibility, had he any nobleness, he never would have wounded your innocent, your ingenuous heart as he has done. Had he respected, had he regarded you properly, he never would have regretted your making me your confidant ; that regret confirms my belief, notwithstanding his solemn protestations of seeing you no more, that he still entertains designs concerning you ; designs,

signs, I am sorry to shock your nature by saying so, of a dishonourable nature. Should he therefore, again throw himself in your way, as I apprehend, shun him, I entreat, I conjure you, my Madeline; as you value your happiness, your honour, the peace of your friends, the esteem of the world."

"Ah, madam, (cried Madeline) I hope you do not doubt my resolution;—my tenderness is wounded, my pride is roused, and thinking as I do of him, could I now permit an interview with de Sevignie, I should be lessened in my own eyes."

"I do not doubt your resolution, my love, (replied the Countess, kissing her cheek) and I beg you to excuse the caution, the unnecessary caution of age. (She now expressed her pleasure at not having written to Clermont, since things had taken so different a turn from what was expected.) I rejoice to think, (continued she) that he will not know how unworthy de Sevignie was of the kindness he shewed him."

Madeline sighed deeply at those words, the violence of offended pride was abated, and in this moment of decreased resentment, an emotion of softness again stole o'er her heart, and made her regret having exposed de Sevignie, by her own animadversions, to the still severer ones of the Countess. She regretted, because from this returning softness she was tempted to doubt his deserving them, and to impute the inconsistencies of his conduct, to difficulties too dreadful perhaps to relate ; and she shuddered at the idea of having, in addition to his other misfortunes, drawn upon him the unmerited imputation of baseness ; but from this idea, torturing in the extreme, reflection soon relieved her, for when she re-considered his conduct, she could not help thinking he deserved that imputation.

“ Yet is it possible, (she cried to herself) that de Sevignie, he who appeared possessed of the nicest delicacy, the most exalted honour, the steadiest principles of rectitude ;
is

is it possible that he can be unamiable? Alas, why cannot I doubt it still;—but no, let me rather rejoice than regret not being able to do so; rejoice, that passion no longer spreads a mist before my eyes: to endeavour to doubt his unworthiness now, would be to try and blind my reason, and weaken my resolves.”

But notwithstanding what she said, she still fluctuated between resentment and tenderness, candour and distrust,—alternately acquitted, alternately condemned him.

With the utmost gentleness, the Countess tried to sooth and steal her from her sorrow; she did not, like a rigid censor, chide her for weakness in indulging it. She knew what it was to have the projects of youthful hope overthrown; the anguish which attends the shock of a first disappointment, and that time must be allowed to conquer it. That time, aided by reason, would heal the wound which had been given to the

gentle bosom of her Madeline, she trusted and believed.

On retiring to her chamber, Madeline could not suppress her tears at the contrast she drew between her present feelings and those of the preceeding night ; and again she began to fancy de Sevignie more unfortunate than unamiable ; when suddenly recollecting her resolution of expelling this idea, she hastily tried to divert her thoughts from it.

“ That we are separated, I am assured, (cried she) and to ascertain whether I have reason to esteem or condemn him, (though soothing perhaps to my feelings to think the former) can now be of little consequence to me.”

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Ah where is now each image gay
The hand of Fairy fancy wove,
The painted spring, elizium gay,
The babbling rill, the cultur'd grove.

HER night was restless and unhappy. “ Ah, (sighed she) how differently, did I imagine it would have ended.” Pale, trembling, dejected, the very reverse of what she had been the preceding morning, she descended to the breakfast parlour, where her melancholy was, if possible, encreased by observing the Countess's, who either from sympathy for her, or from a return of her secret uneasiness, or perhaps from a mixture of both, appeared languid and dejected. She tried, however, to appear chearful but the efforts

efforts she made for that purpose were too faint to succeed, and unable either to beguile her own sadness, or that of her young companions, the day wore heavily away. As they sat, at its decline, by an open window in one of the parlours, and beheld the sun sinking behind the western hills, a deep and involuntary sigh heaved the bosom of Madeline, at reflecting, how very different her feelings were now, from what they had been on the same hour the preceding evening.

The Countess interpreted her sigh, and taking her hand, prest it between her's. "My dear Madeline! (she exclaimed) my sweet girl, it grieves my heart to see you thus deprest. Your present disappointment, I allow, is great; but reflect, and let the reflection compose your mind: how much greater it would have been, how much more poignantly you must have felt it, had you married de Sevignie, and then, when too late, found him to be the worthless character you are now apprehensive he is.

" Few

“ Few there are, my dear Madeline, whose situations, however bad, might not be rendered worse ; we should therefore try not to deserve an augmentation of calamity, by bearing that inflicted upon us with resignation.

“ Why calamity is the prevalent lot of humanity—why our virtuous hopes are so often overthrown—why the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong ; both reason and religion teaches us will be explained hereafter ; in the mean time, let no disappointment, no vicissitudes, however painful and unmerited we may consider them, ever tempt us to doubt, or to arraign the goodness and wisdom of that Being, from whose hand proceeds alike the cup of good and evil.

“ Think not, (she continued) as too many perhaps might do, that I preach what I do not practise ; or, that my lessons are those of a woman, who herself, untried by disappointment, can exhort others to that submission which she never knew the difficulty
of

of acquiring. This, believe me my dear Madeline, is not the case ; I know what it is : when we extend our hand for the rose to gather the thorns—when we open our bosom to hope, to admit despair—when we bask in the sunshine, to be surprised by the storm, and have it burst with fury o'er our unsheltered heads."

" Oh, from every adverse storm may you be sheltered !" exclaimed Madeline, with uplifted eyes.

As she spoke, Father Bertrand, confessor to the Countess, and officiating priest to her household, stopt before the window : he belonged to the community which has been already mentioned, and frequently rambled at the close of day from his convent, to the wild solitudes of the wood surrounding the chateau. He was upwards of sixty, and one of those interesting figures which cannot be viewed by sensibility without pity and veneration ; his noble height still gave an idea of what his form had been, when unbent by infirmity ;

infirmity ; and that form, like a fine ruin, excited the involuntary sigh of regret for the devastations time had made upon it. His hairs were white, and thinly scattered over a forehead, more deeply indented by care than age ; and the sad, the solemn expression of his countenance, denoted his being a son of sorrow, and proved his thoughts were continually bent upon another world, where alone he could receive consolation for the miseries of this.

“ How fares the good ladies of the castle this evening,” cried he, leaning upon his staff, as he stopt before the window.

“ Why not so well, father, (replied the Countess) but that we might be better ; here we are, like two philosophers descanting upon the vanities of life ; and when women talk philosophy, the world says, they must either be indisposed or out of temper.”

Well,

“ Well, I shan’t pretend to contradict what the world says, (cried the good man, smiling) nor since so well employed shall I longer interrupt you, ladies.”

The Countess asked him to come in and take some refreshment, but he refused, and after chatting a little longer, rambled away to the wildest parts of the wood.

“ The story of Father Bertrand, (said the Countess, as he retired) is a striking proof to all that know it, that we should never be too eager in the pursuit of our wishes. As it is short, and rather applicable to what we have been talking about, I will relate it.”—

“ He was son to a gentleman of good family, but still better fortune, who lived in the vicinity of this chateau : the large patrimony he was to inherit, made his parents anxious to give him such an education as should teach him to enjoy it with moderation and elegance

After

“ After learning every thing he could learn in his native country, he was sent abroad to improve himself by visiting various courts, and acquiring that knowledge of men and manners, which is so requisite for those destined to mix in the great world, and which in a fixed residence it is almost impossible to obtain. In the course of his travels he paid a visit to England; and here, in a small town in that kingdom, he became acquainted with a young lady, who at an early age was left an orphan and a dependant on an old capricious aunt, whose only motive for keeping her in the family, was, that on her she could vent that spleen and ill-nature which no one else would bear from her. The fair orphan and Bertrand frequently met each other at different houses; and the beauty of her person, the soft dejection of her manner, and the patient sweetness with which she bore her situation, soon gained a complete conquest over his heart; nor did hers retain its liberty.

“ The

“ The declaration of his attachment Bertrand would have accompanied by an offer of his hand, had not duty and respect to his parents prevented his taking such a step without their knowledge and approbation: he wrote to them for their consent; but instead of receiving it, he received a pressing entreaty to return home immediately; and also an acknowledgment from them at the same time, that they could not bear the idea of his marrying a foreigner and a protestant, as was the lady he paid his addresses to. Bertrand did not attempt to write again, or disregard their entreaty; his duty to them, and his consideration for his own happiness, prompted him to return home without delay, for he knew their hearts, and was convinced, when he once pleaded his cause in person, he would not be refused: calming the disquietude of Caroline by this assurance, and pledging to her vows of unalterable love and fidelity, he embarked for his native country, and as he expected, succeeded in his suit. It was then
the

the depth of winter, and his parents dreading his undertaking a voyage in that inclement season, conjured him to defer, till the ensuing spring, going to England for Caroline, whose marriage they insisted on having celebrated in their own house, from an idea, that if their son was married according to the forms of her church, (which they knew would be the case if his nuptials took place in her country) some heavy calamity would befall him in consequence of that circumstance.

“ But the wishes of Bertrand were too impetuous to comply with theirs ; he rallied their fears, opposed their arguments, and returned, without delay, to England. The friends of Caroline ; for her friends increased when fortune began to smile, now tried to detain her and her lover in England, as his parents had tried to detain him in France, till a more favourable season, but they tried in vain ; the youthful pair dreaded no dangers, or rather overlooked the
idea

idea of any, in their impatience to quit a place which retarded the wishes of one, and brought continually to the mind of the other, a thousand cruel slights and mortifications. They accordingly embarked, elated with hope and expectation; the ship was bound to Normandy, near whose coast Bertrand had some friends settled, who promised, on his landing there, to accompany him to his father's house, in order to be present at his wedding; the weather continued favourable till they had nearly reached their destined port, when it suddenly changed, as if to mock their hopes, and teach the heart of man no certain felicity can be expected in this life. The sailors endeavoured to make for the shore, but in vain, the storm raged with violence, and after tossing about a considerable time the ship at length bulged upon a rock; the long-boat was immediately thrown out, though from the fury of the waves it afforded out little chance of deliverance: this chance, however, was eagerly seized—Bertrand calling

ling upon every Saint in heaven to preserve her, bore the fainting Caroline into it, the sailors crowded in numbers after them, and it almost directly upset. The shock of that moment separated Bertrand and Caroline for ever in this world,—the waves cast him upon a rock, from whence, almost lifeless, he was taken up by some fisherman and conveyed to a hut ; here his friends, whom the expectation of his arrival had drawn to the coast, discovered him. Their care, their assiduity, soon restored his senses—but with what horrors was that restoration accompanied,—the deepest moans, the most piercing, the most frantic cries, were all, for a long time, he had the power of uttering : he then insisted on being taken to the water-side, and here attention alone prevented his committing an act of desperation, by plunging himself amidst the waves which had entombed his love ! one day and one night, he sought her on the “ sea beat shore ; ” the second morning her body was discovered on the strand ; but how altered, by the
3 cloaths

cloaths alone it was known to be that of the Caroline he had lost. Kneeling on the earth, Bertrand solemnly vowed, by the chaste spirit of her o'er whose remains he wept, never to know another earthly love, but to devote the remainder of his days to heaven. His friends conveyed him and the body to his parents, who endeavoured to prevail on him to cancel his vow, but in vain, and as soon as the necessary formalities could be gone through, he took the religious habit.

“His parents, disappointed in their hopes relative to him—their hopes of seeing a little smiling race of his prattling about them, pined away, and were soon laid beside the bones of her, who had been the innocent cause of their trouble.

Bertrand then gave up the house of his forefathers, and the greatest part of the fortune appertaining to it, to a near and distant relation; by this time the turbulence of his grief had abated, and he soon after became,

came, by his benevolence and strict, but unostentatious piety, one of the most respected members of the community he had entered into: his story interested me, and on the death of the old monk, who had been my confessor and chaplain, I appointed him to those offices. But though time and reason have meliorated his sorrows, there are periods when all their violence is revived.

“ When the rough winds of winter howl round his habitation, and bend the tall trees of the mountains by which it is surrounded, 'tis then the remembrance of past events swells his heart with agony; 'tis then he thinks he hears the plaintive voice of Caroline mingled in the blast, and fancies he beholds her shivering spirit stalking through the gloom, and beckoning him away.

“ The wedding garments, which the pride and fondness of his mother prepared for his intended bride; the picture, which, on their parting in England, she gave him,

he still treasures, as the hermit would treasure the relics of a saint. I have beheld them—I have wept over them—I have exclaimed within myself, as I have gazed on these *mementos* of lost happiness—‘ Oh, children of the dust ! what folly to place your hopes, your wishes, on a world whose changes are so sudden ; whose happiness, even while it appears in our view, even while we stretch out our arms to enfold it, flies never to return.’

“ Oh, Madeline ! as Bertrand has shewn me the ornaments designed for his Caroline, and told me their hapless tale, while the big tear of tender recollection and poignant regret has rolled down his cheek, I could only quiet the strong emotions of my heart, by saying, like the holy man himself :

‘ Father of heaven ! thy decrees must surely be for the wisest purposes, else thou wouldst not thus afflict thy creatures ; thy will, therefore, not our’s, be done.’ The for-

rows of Bertrand (resumed the Countess, after pausing a minute) were heightened, by thinking himself accessory to them, in consequence of not regarding either the supplications of his parents or friends for postponing his voyage till a more settled season : so true is it, that those who yield to impetuous passions, will sooner or later have reason to repent doing so."

The mind of Madeline was insensibly calmed, and drawn from its own cares by the discourse of the Countess ; for the precept of wisdom, the tale of instruction is ever pleasing to the children of virtue.

But with that quick transition of feeling, so peculiar to the youthful mind, she felt, with returning composure, a kind of distaste to a world, which daily experience convinced her teemed with calamity.

Soon after the Countess had concluded her little narrative, she requested Madeline

to take her lute—a request, which Madeline attempted not to refuse. In the present state of her mind sad or solemn strains were alone congenial to her feelings, and she selected a hymn to the Supreme Being, celebrating his goodness, and the happiness prepared for those hereafter, who patiently support the trials of this life. Just depressed by a conviction of its sufferings, Madeline derived a kind of divine consolation from words, which gave so consoling an assurance of their being rewarded. At first her voice was weak, and her touch faint and tremulous; but by degrees, as if animated by the subject, her voice regained its strength, and her hand its steadiness; and high on the swelling notes her soul seemed ascending to that heaven, whose glories appeared opening to her view, when a deep sigh, or rather sob, suddenly startled her. Her hand involuntarily rested on the strings, o'er which it was lightly sweeping, and she cast an eager glance towards the Countess. How great was her surprise—her consternation, to see her

her fallen back, pale, and weeping in her chair. The lute instantly dropped from Madeline, and starting up, she instinctively flung her arms round her benefactress, exclaiming, "Good heavens! Madam, what is the matter." Then, without waiting for a reply, she was flying from the room for assistance, when the voice of the Countess made her stop.

"Return, my dear, (said she, raising herself on her chair) I am now better. It was only my spirits were overcome. Your solemn strains awoke in my mind recollections of the most painful nature; the hymn you were playing was a favourite of my lord's. The evening preceding the illness which terminated his life, as pale and languid he sat by me in this very room, he requested me to play it for him; his words, his looks, while he listened, as afterwards considered by me, have since convinced me that he knew his end was approaching, and that he fixed on this hymn as a kind of requiem for his departing

parting spirit. In that light I have ever since regarded it."

Madeline shuddered; she thought there was a ghastly paleness in the countenance of the Countess. "Oh, Madam! (said she), why did you not prevent my playing it?"

"Because, my love, (replied the Countess) though it pains, it also pleases me. I am now better (she continued), and will retire to the chapel for a little time."

"Ah! Madam, (said Madeline), permit me to accompany you to night, for perhaps you may be again taken ill."

"No, my love, (cried the Countess), there is no danger of my being so. I thank you for your kind solicitude about me, but I cannot let you come with me; my composure I know will be perfectly restored by visiting the chapel. Tell Floretta, therefore, to bring me my scarf."—Madeline obeyed, but with a repugnance she could not conquer,—and the Countess wrapping it about her, departed, assuring Madeline she would
hasten

hasten back to supper, and would then expect to find her cheerful.

Madeline, left to herself, strolled out upon the lawn. It was now the dusky hour of twilight, and solitude and silence reigned around. Her thoughts, no longer diverted by conversation, again reverted to past subjects, and deeply ruminating on them, she continued to walk till it grew quite dark : she then returned to the castle, and not finding the Countess in the room where they had parted, she rung for a servant, to enquire whether she was yet come back ; the man replied she was not. Her long stay, after promising to return so soon, filled the mind of Madeline with terror, lest her delay should be occasioned by a return of her illness : and going directly to Agatha, she communicated her apprehensions to her, and entreated her to accompany her to the monastery—an entreaty the faithful creature readily complied with.

CHAP. V.

The wand'ring breath was on the wing to part,
Weak was the pulse, and hardly heav'd the heart.

AS they proceeded thither, Agatha expressed her regret at her lady's persevering in visiting the chapel. "She is there, (said she) encompassed by the dead, and remote from human aid, if such should be required; often and often have I shuddered at the idea of the dangers to which she exposed herself by going thither alone; and often have I taken the liberty of entreating her not to do so, but without effect: she has a particular pleasure in its solitude, and in praying where not only the bones of her ancestors,

cestors, but those of her husband and children rest."

" I own (cried Madeline) I am surprised she can go, at the lonely hours she does, to so dreary a place; which appears to me surrounded by every thing that can appal the imagination "

" For my part (exclaimed Agatha) nothing in the world could tempt me to do so;—Lord! I should be scared out of my very senses by apprehension, if I stopped a few minutes in it after it was dark. Holy Virgin! (cried she suddenly, as they advanced down the valley) protect us;—nothing but love for my lady could tempt me to go on, this place is so frightful."

Madeline could not wonder at the terror she betrayed; the scene was calculated to inspire it, and she felt a degree of it herself:—on either side the mountains rose in black masses to the clouds, and the wind issued from their cavities with a hollow sound, that had something particularly awful in it, whilst the ravens screamed horribly from the trees

which waved about their feet. Madeline began to regret not having procured the protection of one of the men, but that regret, with the fears which excited it, she concealed from her companion ; both, however, were too much disturbed to continue to converse ; and in silence they reached the monastery, and were just turning into it, when the figure of a man, standing beneath a broken arch, near the entrance, caught their eyes ; both started, and Agatha, who, from being foremost, had a better view of him than Madeline, instantly exclaimed, but without withdrawing her eyes from him, “ The Lord defend my soul ! what brings you hither ? ” She received no reply however—the man who had neither noticed her nor her companion till she spoke, started at the first sound of her voice, and, after surveying them for a moment with a look of affright, precipitately fled down the valley.

“ Oh, my lady ! my dearest lady ! (exclaimed Agatha) some evil, I fear, has befallen her.”

“ Oh,

"Thank heaven! she does," said Agatha.

Madeline dropped upon her knees in a transport of joy. "Gracious heaven! (she exclaimed) receive my thanks. (Then hastily rising) had I not better fly to the castle (said she) for assistance."

"First help me to bind her wound (cried Agatha.) Madeline was habited in a lawn dress; she now instantly tore it from her waist, and giving it to Agatha, supported the head of the Countess upon her bosom, while a bandage was bound round her. The motion of raising her and binding her wound, served to bring the Countess to herself; as she regained her sensibility, with a deep groan, and without opening her eyes, she extended her hand, and made a feeble effort to push away Agatha, exclaiming as she did so—

"Murderous ruffian, forbear! 'tis not in mercy to me, but to your unnatural employer I ask you to spare my life; for never will peace or joy revisit his heart, if my blood rests upon his head."

"Oh!

“ Oh ! my friend, my more than mother, (exclaimed Madeline, pressing her cold cheek to the yet colder one of the Countess) no murderous ruffian is now near you.”

The Countess sighed heavily, and opening her dim eyes, looked round her some minutes before she spoke, as if doubting the reality of what she saw ; then in a faint voice, but one that evidently denoted pleasure, she cried, “ Great and glorious Being, I thank thee—I shall not die far from those I love, beneath the cruel hand of an assassin.”

“ Dearly shall he, who raised that hand against you, rue his crime ! (exclaimed Agatha) ; I know the villain—I discovered his accursed confidant near the chapel, and I will bring him to punishment, though my own life should be forfeited by doing so.”

“ Mistaken woman, (said the Countess in a hollow voice) how would you avenge me ? is it by exposing to infamy and death those more precious to me than life—by giving to my heart a deeper wound than my body has sustained ?

“ This

“ Oh, heavens ! (cried Madeline, trembling so she could scarcely stand) what evil do you apprehend ? who is that stranger ? why, if he knew you, as I suppose he did from your knowing him, did he fly from you ? ”

“ Because he is a villain,” (replied Agatha, as she rushed into the chapel followed by Madeline, whose terror and amazement were beyond language to express.) The moon then at its full, aided by the twilight of summer, gave a full view of the interior of the chapel ; and as they entered it, they beheld another man darting out of a small door opposite to them. Madeline involuntarily caught the arm of Agatha, and both pausing, strained an eye of agony and terror after him : they paused however but for a moment ; for a deep groan reaching their ears, made them hastily rush up the aisle from whence it proceeded, where, with feelings too dreadful to relate, they beheld their friend, their benefactress, lying stretched before the monument of her husband, apparently lifeless, and a

small stream of blood issuing from her side. A shriek of mingled grief and horror burst from Madeline, and, unable to stand, she sunk beside her, and clasped her trembling arms around her. Agatha, though equally afflicted, was not so much shocked as Madeline; for from the moment she beheld the stranger whom she had addressed outside the chapel, she had from secret reasons of her own been almost convinced, on entering it, she should behold a sight of horror. From being in some degree prepared for it, she was in some degree collected; and kneeling down, soon discovered that her lady still breathed, and trusted, that from the small quantity of blood which issued from it, her wound was not of a very dangerous nature. She now called upon Madeline to assist her in staunching it, ere she went to the castle for some of the servants to assist in carrying her thither.

The almost fainting senses of Madeline were recalled by her voice, and starting up, she wildly demanded if the Countess lived.

“Thank

“ This spot I will not quit !—no aid will I receive—on this cold marble will I die—except you promise to give up such an intention—except you swear, solemnly swear, within those consecrated walls, never to divulge to mortal ear the author of my injuries.”

“ My dearest lady, (cried Agatha, terrified by her expressions), though to see vengeance executed on the wretch who attempted to take away your life, would rejoice my very soul, I will do but what you please ; I will promise what you wish.”

“ Swear then !” exclaimed the Countess.

“ I do, (replied Agatha) by all my hopes of happiness here and hereafter, to lock within my heart, from every human ear, all I know concerning this black transaction.”

“ And you, Madeline (resumed the Countess), must do the same.”

“ She knows not (said Agatha, interrupting her lady) by whom the atrocious deed has been committed.”

“ Thank Heaven ! (cried the Countess)
even

even from her, though I might confide in her prudence, I would conceal him—conceal my having a relative, who, from self-interest, could be tempted to take away my life. But Madeline, my love, (continued she, looking at her) will you not quiet my troubled heart by the assurance I desire, from every being, I except not even your father; you must conceal my wound being occasioned by premeditated treachery; you must, like Agatha, to all my household, to all who shall enquire concerning it, declare it owing, as I myself shall do, to some unknown and wandering ruffian.”

“Hear me swear, then, (said Madeline with energy) by every thing precious to me in heaven or on earth never to disclose what you have desired me to conceal.”

“Enough,” cried the Countess in a weak voice; and the next instant, as if overcome by the exertions she had used, she fainted away.

“Fly, my dear young lady, (said Agatha to Madeline) our efforts to recover her without other assistance will be vain.”

“Madeline

“ Madeline started up, and walked with hasty steps half way down the aisle ; she then paused—paused from the most horrible suggestions of fear. “ Should the murderers return—(cried she, gasping for breath at the very idea)—should they return before assistance can be procured, and complete their dreadful design ; or should they be still lurking about the chapel, will they not seize me as I go for that assistance, and sacrifice me to their own safety !”

In an agony of fear—an agony which took from her all motion, she leant against a pillar ;—a deep groan from the Countess in a few minutes roused her from this situation. “ Oh heavens ! (she exclaimed, rushing forward) she expires through my means. (She instantly quitted the chapel)—If I die, (said she, as she did so) I die in the cause of friendship.” A cold dew hung upon her temples, and she could scarcely drag her trembling limbs after her ; every yard, almost, she involuntarily stopped to listen, and to cast her fearful eyes around : ready at the first intimation

intimation of danger, to retreat to the walls of the monastery. But she received no such intimation, and when she came within sight of the garden, her courage revived; her strength returned with her courage, and, like an affrighted lapwing, she then almost flew to the house, and, scarcely touching the ground, rushed into the servants' hall. A figure as terrific as the one she now exhibited, they had never, either in reality or imagination, seen; her face was pale as death, her hair dishevelled, and her cloaths torn and stained with blood. She attempted to speak, but her voice died away inarticulate; in about a minute she made another effort, and, in a voice so hollow, that it seemed issuing from the very recesses of her heart, exclaimed, "Fly!—your lady—there's murder in the chapel!"

Struck with terror, the servants eagerly crowded round her to know what she meant. "Ask no explanation! (she cried, in almost breathless agitation) a moment's delay may be fatal." The men no longer hesitated to obey

obey her, and unable to endure her suspense till they returned, she went back with them to the monastery; but by the time she had reached it, she grew sick with apprehension that the ruffians had returned and finished their bloody work; and whilst the servants entered it, she was compelled to clasp her arms round a pillar at its door for support. Whilst she leant here, a cry of horror reached her from the chapel, and her spirits grew fainter. "She is gone for ever!" she exclaimed, sinking upon the earth, no longer able to stand from the tremor that seized her. In a few minutes she heard the servants approaching; she then raised her head, and beheld two of them bearing ont their lady. "Does she live?" asked Madeline.

"Live, (repeated the weeping Agatha), yes, dear Mam'selle, she still lives, and notwithstanding this dreadful accident, will live, I trust, for many years to come."—Relieved from the horrible fears which had overwhelmed her, Madeline again recovered
her

her strength, and was able immediately to return with the servants to the castle.

By the time they reached it the Countess had regained her senses; and as soon as she was laid on her bed, she commanded, whoever went for a surgeon not, on any account whatsoever, to inform him for what purpose he was sent for till he came to the castle; and that at the peril of being dismissed from her service if they disobeyed her. Her domestics should strictly conceal what had befallen her from every one out of her house, assigning as a reason for this command, that if known, she should be teased by enquiries about it; but to Agatha and Madeline, it was evident it proceeded from a fear of having the Russian detected if his atrocious crime was mentioned. The servants promised obedience to their lady, and two of the men directly set out for the nearest town to procure a surgeon, whilst another went to the convent for Father Bertrand, who on every emergency was the counsellor and comforter of the family;

he

he came without delay, and the moment he entered the Countess's chamber, who had sent for him, she dismissed every other person from it.

Nothing but the solemn promise which Madeline knew Agatha to have given, to conceal the author of the Countess's sufferings could now have prevented her from asking who he was. The more she reflected on the horrible affair, the more mysterious it appeared to her, and the more astonished and perplexed she felt. How strange that a woman of the Countess's benevolence, whose temper was gentleness itself, whose heart was the seat of charity, and whose liberal hand ever kept pace with the wishes of that heart, should have provoked the enmity of any one. Yet not enmity alone provoked the attempt at her life; her words in the chapel on first regaining her senses, declared its being also prompted by some view of self-interest.—This was another mystery to Madeline, for she knew of none but Monsieur

sieur and Madame D'Alembert, that could be materially benefited by the death of her benefactress.

Agatha left her soon after they had quitted the Countess's room, to prepare things for her lady against the surgeon came. But Floretta continued with her, in hopes of having her curiosity, which exceeded both her sorrow and surprise, gratified by hearing the particulars of the attack made upon the Countess by the robber, as she and all the rest of the servants supposed the assassin to be.

“ Lord Mam’selle, (cried she, interrupting the deep reverie of Madeline) you must have been terribly frightened when you first beheld the villain. I protest it was well it was not I but Agatha who went with you, for I should certainly have dropt down dead at once upon the spot ; I dare say he was a frightful looking creature ”

“ I do

“ I do not know, (said Madeline) for I did not see his face.”

“ Lord, I am very sorry you did not, for then if you ever met him again, you might have sworn to him at once, and have had him taken up. Well, to be sure, I always thought my lady would come to some harm by going to that old ruin; I wish with all my soul it was all tumbled down, I don't know any thing it is fit for, but to enclose the dead or secret a robber;—many and many a time have I quaked with fear, lest my lady should have desired me to attend her to it. Certainly, 'tis a horrid thing to live in such a dismal place as we do; I dare say we shall all be murdered some night or other in our beds: we have nothing in the world to defend ourselves with, for the old guns are so rusty that I am sure it would only be wasting powder to try and do any thing with them. I think it would be a wise thing Mam'selle, if you would try and prevail on my lady, to send her jewels and plate away, for if the gang, to which no doubt

doubt the villain who attacked her in the chapel belongs, once heard a rumour of their being gone, and that they assuredly would from always having their spies about, they would never, I am sure, think it worth their while to break into the castle.

“ Well, many men many minds, and many women I suppose the same. For I am certain if I was my lady, I would never live with the fine fortune she has, amongst these dismal woods and mountains. No, no, Paris would be the place for my money.”

“ Do you think Floretta, (asked Madeline, who sat as pale as death, and almost motionless) that the surgeon will soon arrive.”

“ Why that depends, Mam’selle, (replied Floretta) upon the haste Antoine and Jerome make in going for him, and the haste he makes in coming back with them. Though upon reflection indeed, I should not be surprised if none of them ever reached the castle ; for ’tis extremely probable they

may all fall into the hands of the gang, who no doubt are lurking about the castle."

"I have not a fear of that nature," said Madeline.

"I am sure I hope mine may be an idle one (cried Floretta); poor fellows! they would die a melancholy death if such an accident befel them. Well, Mam'selle, I must now leave you; there is fortunately a sliding wainscot in my chamber, and I shall go directly and hide all my good clothes within it; I shall then try if I can't prevail on the men to see what can be done with the old fire arms. But after all, Mam'selle, (resumed she, after pausing a minute) if the rogues once broke into the house, what comfort could I receive from knowing my clothes were hid, for to be sure I should be killed as well as the rest of the family, and what avails fine clothes or money, if one has no life to enjoy them." She now retired, and Madeline remained alone in a state of the most dreadful disquietude, till the arrival of the surgeon.

Father Bertrand then came to her, and Madeline eagerly enquired what he thought about her friend.

“ With respect to her wound (replied he) I cannot give an opinion, as I left her room the moment the surgeon entered it ; but with respect to her mind I think her an angel.”

It instantly struck Madeline, that to this venerable man the Countess had imparted every secret of her heart, and that his warm, his energetic praise, proceeded from admiration at her mercy and forbearance, in not attempting to punish the monster who had injured her. “ To a much later date (he continued) may heaven preserve the life of a woman, whose charities and example are so beneficial to mankind.”—“ Oh ! long, long may she be spared (cried Madeline) with uplifted hands ; who amongst the children of distress would have such reason to mourn her death as I should.”

Father Bertrand informed her, that as soon as he had seen the surgeon, he should

go and write to Madame D'Alembert to come directly to the chateau.

“Poor lady! (cried Madeline, with a sigh) how dreadfully shocked and affected she will be, to hear of the injury her mother has received!”

“I do not mean to inform her of it,” replied he.

“But when she comes to the chateau, she cannot be kept in ignorance of it,” cried Madeline.

“Such precautions (said the Father) will be used, that even then she will not know it. The sight of her amiable and beloved child will, I trust, have a happy effect upon the estimable mother.”

The surgeon now made his appearance; the faltering accents of Madeline were unequal to the enquiry her heart dictated; but Father Bertrand, more composed, soon learned, that the Countess's wound was not dangerous. “My principal fears, (said the surgeon) arise from the fever with which she is threatened, in consequence of the agita-

tion of her mind." He then mentioned his intention of continuing at the castle till he had dressed her wound the next morning.

Madeline, no longer able to controul her strong anxiety to be with her friend, and certain that Agatha would have every proper attention paid to him, now bade him and Father Bertrand good night, and repaired to the chamber of the Countess, where she resolved to continue till morning. All was quietness within it, for the Countess, exhausted by the pain she had suffered during the dressing of her wound, and her long conversation preceding it with Father Bertrand, had fallen into a slumber; and her attendants, Agatha and Floretta, fearful of disturbing her, would not move;—the latter, however, could not avoid whispering to Madeline, that she had prevailed on the men to collect some of the fire-arms, and that they had promised to double-bar all the doors.

Deep groans frequently escaped the Countess, but she continued tolerably quiet for about two hours ; she then, in a weak voice, called for drink ; which the ready hand of Madeline instantly presented to her.

“ Why, my love (said the Countess, as Madeline, bending over her, raised her languid head), why do I see you here ?”

“ Ah ! Madam (said Madeline), the only comfort my heart can know is in watching by you.”

“ I thank you for your tenderness (replied the Countess) ; but I must now insist on your retiring to bed : nay, do not attempt to refuse doing so (seeing Madeline about speaking) ; I will not go to sleep (and want of rest you may be sure will injure me), till you leave me.”

Those words conquered all opposition on the part of Madeline ; and, after kissing her benefactress's hand, she withdrew, though with the greatest reluctance, to her chamber.

She could not bring herself to go to bed, lest she should not in a moment, if called upon, be ready to attend her friend; she took off her torn garments, and putting on a wrapper, lay down; but though fatigued to a degree, her mind was too much agitated, too full of horror, to permit her to sleep: and, after passing a few restless hours, she arose as soon as it was light.

CHAP. VI.

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Let's talk of graves, and worms, and epitaphs.

MADLINE rose with a heaviness of heart which left her scarcely power to move ; the day was as gloomy as her mind, and added, perhaps, by its melancholy to her's :— a slow, but penetrating, rain was falling, and the cattle that grazed upon the lawn were dripping with wet, and retiring to the most sheltered parts of the wood :—the waters of the lake looked black and troubled, nor did any brightness in the sky give a promise of a finer day. To complete the dejection of Madeline, on going to the dressing-room

adjoin-



adjoining the Countess's chamber, she was informed by Agatha, whom, with Father Bertrand, she found there, that soon after she had left the Countess, she had had a fit of the most alarming nature. "I directly called the surgeon (proceeded Agatha), and he sat with her the remainder of the night, during which she had many returns of it: he has already dressed her wound, being under a necessity of departing at an early hour, and he says it bears a much more dangerous appearance than it did at first. Her fever too is augmented; but he dreads nothing so much as a return of the fits, which, in her present exhausted state, are, he says, enough to kill her."

"Oh! why, why (cried Madeline, whose agonies, at hearing this melancholy account, were inexpressible), why was I not called when so dreadful a change took place?"

"At first we were really too much confused to think about you (said Agatha); and when my Lady recovered, and we would  
have

have gone for you, she commanded us not to disturb you."

Madeline burst into tears at this proof of her friend's consideration for her amidst her own sufferings.

"Be composed, my dear young Lady (said Father Bertrand), Providence may perhaps produce another change more favourable to our wishes."

Madeline now asked if she might not see the Countess. Agatha answered in the affirmative. She accordingly entered the chamber. The foot-curtains of the bed, and those of one of the windows, were open, and Madeline had thus sufficient light to perceive the striking alteration which had taken place in the countenance of her friend; her lips were livid, her eyes were sunk, and a ghastly paleness overspread her face. The tears of Madeline increased; and when

*How little Madeline*

the Countess, whose heavy eyes opened on hearing her light step, called her to her bedside, and, extending her hand, asked her how she was? deep convulsive sobs prevented all reply.

“ Pray moderate this concern (said the Countess); 'tis true it excites my gratitude, but it also gives me unutterable pain;—the soothing attention of a friend is the best cordial I can receive, but that cordial you will not be able to administer if you yield to those emotions.”

“ Oh! Madam (cried Madeline, sinking on her knees, and pressing the cold hand of the Countess between her's), Oh! Madam, I will try to repress them; I will try to do every thing which can give me the smallest power of serving you.”

“ I am convinced you will, my love (replied the Countess), and the conviction is soothing to my sick heart. Oh! Madeline, 'tis not my frame, so much as my mind, that is disordered.”

Weakness

Weakness precluded farther conversation for the present, and Madeline seated herself Beside the bed, nor stirred till absolutely commanded by the Countess to go into the next room to breakfast. She took but little, and quickly resumed her place by her friend.

About the middle of the day, the Countess had another fit. Apprized of its danger, the distress and terror of Madeline almost reduced her to the same extremity, and some of the servants were compelled to carry her from the room till their Lady had recovered. On regaining her senses, the Countess ordered Father Bertrand to be sent for; and, on his arrival, she dismissed every one else from the room. While he was shut up with her Ladyship, dinner was served in the dressing-room for Madeline, but served in vain; the grief and anxiety of her mind would neither permit her to eat nor drink, though pressed to do so by the faithful Agatha and the voluble Floretta, both of whom, but particularly the former, had a very sincere regard for her.

She was informed by the latter on Agatha's quitting the room, as a great secret, that the surgeon had been requested by the Countess to bring a notary with him the next morning from the town where he lived, in order to make her will. "We all guess, Mam'selle (said Floretta), that 'tis on your account she is going to make one."

"Heaven grant (cried Madeline with fervour), that from her own hand alone I may ever receive any mark of her regard."

"Why to be sure, Mam'selle (said Floretta), that might be as pleasant a way as the other; but 'tis a comfort at any rate to be certain of it. One way or other, I am a great advocate for people making their wills; for you must know, Mam'selle, I lost a great deal by an old uncle of mine in Burgundy dying without one. He always promised to leave me every thing he had; but he was always of a shilly-shally disposition: so death whipped him off without his putting his promise into execution, and his property was then divided amongst all his relations. Had  
he

he kept his promise, little as folks think of me now, I can assure you, Mam'selle, I should have been an heiress, for he owned two very fine vineyards and an excellent house, and several large flocks of sheep; and with all those I think I might have held up my head pretty high."

"I think you hold it up high enough already," said Agatha, who had entered before the conclusion of the speech.

"Not higher (replied Floretta pertly), than I have a right to do."

"That point might be disputed," cried Agatha.

"Oh, not at present," said Madeline, to whom every sound was irksome, that did not convey some tidings of the Countess.

Father Bertrand continued a considerable time with the Countess; and when he left her, he passed hastily through the dressing-room. Madeline then returned to the chamber, followed by Agatha, and resumed her station. The Countess did not  
appear



appear worse; and desired they might be left together.

“You have heard, my love, I suppose (said she, turning her languid eyes upon Madeline as Agatha closed the door after her), that Madame D’Alembert is sent for.”

“I have, Madam,” replied Madeline.

“I hope (resumed the Countess) she may not arrive too late.”

“Heaven forbid! (cried Madeline shuddering); I trust when she arrives, she will find your Ladyship pretty well recovered.”

“Believe me, my dear (said the Countess), ’tis on her account I principally desire to recover; she still chains me to a world, to which I am in a great degree grown indifferent, from the loss of several of my dearest connections, as well as many other heavy calamities;—but for her, I should look forward to the idea of quitting it with pleasure, as I should to a release from pain and trouble—should consider it with delight, as a  
means

means of re-uniting me to those whom, while on earth, I must for ever mourn.

“ For the sake of my beloved child I wish to be spared a little longer ; with increasing years, she may perhaps acquire that fortitude which I fear she would at present want to support my loss. But should my wish be disappointed—should she arrive too late to receive my last blessing, my admonition against a sorrow, not only useless, but inimical to every duty—to you, Madeline, I entrust that blessing, that admonition for her ; certain that, as one will be delivered by solemnity, so the other will be enforced with sympathy. Should it be my destiny never more to open my eyes upon her in this world, to you, Madeline, I leave the task of consoling her ;—a task not unacceptable, I am convinced, to your grateful nature, and one well suited to its gentleness. She is already prepared to love and to esteem you ; and, from a predilection in your favour, will listen patiently to all you say. Represent, therefore, to her if (indeed it happens),

happens), that the event she regrets, could not, according to the laws of human nature, have been much longer delayed. And, Oh! Madeline, I adjure you, never let her know how it was accelerated."

"May Heaven only prosper me (cried Madeline) as I keep inviolably from her knowledge the injury you received.

"Excuse my betraying a doubt of your doing so (resumed the Countess), after the solemn promise I have already received from you to that purpose; my fears for her urge me even to unnecessary caution. Oh! Madeline, great as was the pleasure I ever derived from your society, 'tis now heightened by considering you in the light of my child's comforter;—you will console, you will strengthen her, you will reconcile her to my loss."

"Impossible! impossible!" exclaimed Madeline, in the fulness of her heart, and bursting into tears.

"Ah! Madeline (said the Countess, affected by her emotion), do not embitter moments

moments like these by a sorrow which will destroy all the hopes I entertained of your being a consoler to my child."

"May every event (cried Madeline, sinking on her knees), may every event (with uplifted hands) which could place her in want of consolation, be far, far distant from her. But should such an event now happen, Oh! may Heaven grant me power equal to my inclination to give it to her!"

"After my death," proceeded the Countess.

"Oh! Madam (interrupted Madeline), do not talk of it—you stab me to the very soul by doing so."

"Rather rejoice than grieve to hear me do so (said the Countess); how much more dreadful, at the very moment when I stand, perhaps, upon the brink of the grave, to find me trembling, shrinking at the idea of dissolution! I have always tried to act so as to be prepared for it; I have always prayed, that I might be composed when it approached—might be able, in the last extremity of nature

ture, to hold out my hands to my Creator, deprecate his wrath, and implore his mercy. Oh! my love, but for the precious ties I have still remaining, I should welcome it as a release from a world that teems with troubles. But I will not, by perpetually reverting to those troubles, cast a cloud over the youthful prospects of my Madeline."

"Alas! (thought Madeline) they are already clouded."

"Life (resumed the Countess) is a chequered scene, and, by a proper performance of our duties, we may enjoy many comforts in it; 'tis the use we make of those comforts, and the manner in which we support their loss, that fixes the peace or misery of our last moments. Oh! happy are they (continued the Countess, while a faint spark of animation was rekindled in her eye), Oh! happy are they, who can review their past conduct without regret! who can think, to use the language of a poet of a sister country, that when their bones have run their race, they  
may

may rest in blessings, and have a tomb of orphan's tears wept over them.

“ But to resume the subject you interrupted.—After my death, Madame D'Alembert, I am sure, will seek retirement; and the retirement of this chateau I am confident she will prefer to that of any other place, should Monsieur D'Alembert permit her to remain in it. Till more happily settled, I hope, and believe, your father will allow you to be her companion whenever she visits, and while she continues in it alone; for your society, I am convinced, will ever prove a source of comfort to her. But remember, I never desire you to be her companion, except she is without the company of Monsieur D'Alembert: and believe me, my Madeline, I am not so selfish as not to hope that you may soon have tenderer claims to fulfil than any she can have upon you. Let not the disappointment of your first expectations make you suppress all others; oppose reason to despondence, and the latter will soon be conquered. 'Tis a duty



duty you owe your father as well as yourself, to try and do every thing which can promote your happiness; endeavour, therefore, to erase from your heart those impressions, which can only give you pain, and to prepare it to esteem and be propitious to some worthy man.

“ Should chance again throw de Sevignie in your way, fly from him instantly. I conjure you, except he offers a full explanation of his conduct. Excuse me, my love (on hearing a gentle sigh steal from Madeline) for mentioning a subject that is painful to you; but you are so innocent, so totally unacquainted with art, that too much caution cannot be used in guarding you against it. And even then (continued she, returning to the subject of de Sevignie) if he should offer to account for his conduct, do not listen to him; refer him to your father to give the explanation; for an unimpassioned ear he cannot deceive. If by any chance you should ever discover him to be the amiable character you once fancied, you will find by my will, which I  
purpose

purpose making to-morrow, that want of fortune will be no hindrance to your union."

Madeline could not speak, but tears, more eloquently than words could have done, expressed her feelings.

"But I am wrong (resumed the Countess), in having suggested the idea of such an union to you—an idea which may counteract all I have before been saying."

"No, Madam (said Madeline in a low voice), it will not."

"Please me, my Madeline (cried the Countess after a pause), by saying that you will remember what I have said to you."

"Remember! (repeated Madeline); Oh! Madam, could you think I could ever forget aught you said?—Remember!—I will do more—I will try to fulfil every injunction you have given me, if indeed (in a scarcely articulate voice) it should be necessary to do so."

"I thank

“ I thank you for saying so (replied the Countess); I thank you not only for this, but for the many proofs of affection and attention I have received from you. Your society has been a greater happiness, a greater comfort to me than I can express; it has frequently beguiled the cares which oppressed me—cares which the generality of people considered me a stranger to. I wished to be thought happy, and I endeavoured to appear so; but no tongue could describe the anguish which has long preyed upon my heart. Never, however, let this involuntary effusion of confidence escape you; let it be buried in your breast with all you know concerning the black transaction in the chapel—a transaction which I fervently hope may never be known to more than the few already unhappily acquainted with it;—from every eye I would conceal its author;—my forgiveness is his, and my earnest prayers are offered up to Heaven for its forgiveness also for him.”

The evening was now far advanced, and the Countess appeared exhausted by speaking. Madeline besought her to take a reviving cordial; she complied with the entreaty, and then said she would settle herself to rest. She charged Madeline to retire at an early hour to bed. "You look pale and agitated, my love (said she); but cheer up—the mention of death does not make me nearer dying. Farewell! may good angels for ever watch around you!" Madeline pressed her lips to her cheek; and then rising from her knees, closed the curtains of the bed, and withdrew. She sent Agatha and Floretta to the chamber; then retired to her own, where she offered up a fervent prayer to Heaven for the restoration of her valuable and beloved friend; after which, finding herself still very languid, and the rain being over, she descended to the garden, hoping the evening air might revive her.

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## CHAP. VII.

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When the sun sets, shadows that shew'd at noon  
But small, appear most long and terrible ;—  
So when we think Fate hovers o'er our heads,  
Our apprehensions shoot beyond all bounds ;  
Owls, ravens, crickets, seem the watch of death ;  
Nature's worst vermin scare her God-like sons ;  
Echoes, the very leavings of a voice,  
Grow babbling ghosts, and call us to our graves ;  
Each mole-hill thought swells to a huge Olympus,  
While we, fantastic dreamers ! heave and puff,  
And sweat with an imagination's weight. LEE.

MADLINE went upon a high and  
gravelled terrace to avoid the wetness of  
the low and grassy paths beneath it. But  
though the rain was over, the evening was  
extremely

extremely unpleasant, a cold and piercing wind howled through the trees, of whose increasing violence the hoarse screams of water-fowl gave sure and melancholy intimation, the clouds seemed staggering with giddy poise, and the moon vainly endeavouring to emerge from them, if for a moment she was discovered,

Riding to her highest noon,  
Like one that had been led astray,  
Through the Heavens' wide pathless way.

Her watery lustre rather increased than diminished the solemn gloom. Madeline, however, pursued her way, and as she cast her eyes upon the long perspective of black and distant mountains, she thought of the friends that had so recently travelled over them, and her regret for their absence was heightened by believing their company would have been a source of pleasure and comfort to the Countess. From them her thoughts reverted to another object, one she



dared not think her friend, yet could not call her enemy ; the idea of his being now exposed upon the cheerless heights she viewed, to the inclement blast, wrung her heart with agony ; she tried, however, to repel it, by reflecting that it would, by enervating, render her unable to pay the attentions she wished to her benefactress ; and also, that to think voluntarily of him, was acting contrary to the solemn resolution she had formed, to try and forget him. She continued out till the wind grew so violent that it quite chilled and fatigued her ; as she returned to the chateau she saw on every side a blackening train of clamorous rooks seeking their accustomed shelter among the tall trees surrounding it, while, assiduous in his bower, the owl plied his sad song, and the water-fowl, wheeling from their nests upon the lake, screamed along the land.

Madeline slowly ascended the stairs, and repairing to the dressing-room, found Agatha and Floretta there ; she eagerly enquired

quired about the Countess, and they informed her, that she still slept, and had done so almost from the time she had quitted her. They also said, that her Ladyship had desired them to sit up in the dressing-room, as a light in her chamber was disagreeable to her. Madeline instantly declared she would keep them company, and felt rejoiced to hear of the repose of her friend, flattering herself it was a sign of her being better.

Every thing, which could give comfort to the night, was already provided. A cheerful fire blazed in the grate, the brightness and warmth of which were truly reviving to the depressed spirits and chilled frame of Madeline ; and before it lay a table, covered with bread, meat, and rich wines. Madeline took a bit of bread and some wine, and seated herself beside the fire. It was now the hour at which the servants generally went to rest, and with light steps they were soon heard retiring to their respective chambers ; a profound stillness then reigned throughout the

Castle—a stillness, however, which was soon interrupted by the wind, that had now increased to a tremendous degree. Sometimes it howled dismally through the long galleries; sometimes came in such sudden squalls against the doors, that it almost burst them open, whilst the forest was heard groaning beneath its fury; and ever and anon loose stones came tumbling from the battlements of the Castle.

The dejection of Madeline's heart returned—a dejection, which the account she received of her friend had a little dissipated, and with it a terror she could not suppress; she laid down the cup of wine, and casting her eyes upon her companions, perceived, by their countenances, they were equally affected.

“How mournfully the wind howls (said Agatha, in a low voice); “the Lord have mercy (devoutly crossing herself) upon all who are at sea! many a stout heart will go  
to

to the bottom, I fear, to-night. 'Tis very odd, yet very true, that the night before my Lord the Count de Merville (Heaven rest his soul ! again crossing herself) died, there was just such a storm as there is now ; the noise it made throughout the house was just as if people had been fighting and shrieking about it. I thought at the time, the sounds were presageful ones ; particularly as the birds kept such a screaming and fluttering about the windows, for their screams are always sure foretellers of death. Indeed they have not been very quiet to night."

" No (cried Madeline, wishing to check the involuntary horror with which the words of Agatha had inspired her), " because they are now, as they were then, disturbed by the storm ; 'tis well known, that their screams not only foretel, but last during one. I have heard my father say, that people who live near the sea always take warning by them, and never (if possible to avoid doing so) venture upon it, while they continue."

"I shall never be made, however, to believe that they do not forebode something more than a storm (cried Agatha); no, Mam'selle, be assured they are certain prognostics of death; but such warnings as these are not confined to one family, like others that I know of: For instance, in the Castle of the Marquis de Vermandois, about two leagues from this, a great bell always tolls before the death of any one belonging to it; and there never was any change about taking place in this chateau that there was not a dreadful storm before-hand, accompanied by the fall of an old suit of armour, which hangs on the left side of the hall, nearly opposite the dining parlour, and which belonged to the founder of the mansion."

"I know the suit you mean (said Madeline); I have often examined it as a curious piece of antiquity; but the reason it falls, when there is a storm, is, because the wind then gets through the crevices of the walls, and blows it down."

"You



"You are very incredulous, Mam'selle (cried Agatha); but you'll never be able to make me believe otherwise than I do now. Lord! I still tremble at the recollection of what I suffered, when I heard the armour fall with such a crash a few minutes before my Lord's death. I was alone with him, and that, to be sure, augmented my terror; for my lady, overcome by grief, had fainted, and was carried from the room by the other attendants."

"I have heard say, indeed (cried Floretta, who had hitherto listened to the words of Agatha with the most profound attention) that those warnings of death are very common."

"God, of his infinite mercy (said Madeline) may perhaps give such warnings to the wicked, in order to awaken them to repentance; but to the good, to those whose lives prepare them at any hour for his summons, I never can believe he does."

"I shall enter into no argument about the matter (cried Agatha); for nothing could persuade me out of my own opinion."



“ Yet what Mam’selle says seems just enough (said Floretta) ; for why should the good, who need no preparation for death, be warned of it as well as those whose bad actions render it necessary they should, in order to have them brought to repentance.”

“ Well (replied Agatha), I have not a doubt but what they come to both?”

“ What a dreadful thing it must be, to have a troubled conscience, when one is near dying,” resumed Floretta.

“ Ay, or at any other time either (exclaimed Agatha) ; many a foul deed has it forced people to reveal.”

“ There is a memorable story told about that (said Floretta), in the part of Burgundy I come from.”

“ Well, tell it (cried Agatha) ; it will help to pass away the time.”

“ There stood, about fifty years ago (began Floretta, drawing her chair closer to her companion’s), near the village where I was born, an old mansion, which had for many years been uninhabited ; for its owner, being  
given

given to travel in foreign parts, never gave himself any trouble at all about repairing it ; so that, owing to his neglect, it went by degrees so much to rack and ruin, that two servants, who had been left in it, thought it unsafe to continue in it, and accordingly quitted it.

“ Well, in process of time, the unthrifty master of this old chateau died ; and never having been married, it fell to a distant relation, who was delighted (as you may well think) to have the fine estate surrounding it become his : he was neither given to squandering nor gadding ; and knowing what the comforts of a good home were, he directly ordered the ruin to be pulled down, that he might have another house built in its place. This you may be sure was a joyful order for the tenants ; for 'tis the life of the poor souls to have a rich landlord live amongst them, particularly one that is generous and good, as was the gentleman I am speaking of. They set merrily to work, and soon demolished most of the building ; for 'tis a true saying,

that willing minds, like many hands, make light work.

“ As they were destroying the wall of a vault, which had once been used for family stores, they found, within a niche of it, against which a parcel of loose stones were piled, the skeleton of a full grown person.— You may well conceive their consternation at such a sight ; for it immediately struck them that this was the skeleton of a murdered person, else what should bring it there.

“ The discovery was soon spread throughout the village, and all the folks came flocking to the place. They were all of one opinion, that some one had been murdered in the house, and that the crime had been committed after it became deserted. They strove to recollect whether any person, within their memories, had been suddenly missed from their neighbourhood, but could not remember a circumstance of the kind.

“ While they were busy talking over the matter, there came riding by an elderly gentleman, well dressed, and of a grave and comely

comely appearance ; so seeing the crowd, he stopped his horse, as was natural enough, and alighting from it, entered the court-yard, and enquired what was the matter.

‘ A sad affair, master (replied one of the oldest of the villagers) ; we have just discovered that a murder was committed within the walls we have been destroying.’

‘ A murder ! (repeated the gentleman, changing colour) ; a murder !—Pray, my good friend, how did you discover it ?’

‘ Why, by finding a skeleton hid within a vault : you may be sure, if the person to whom it belonged had died fairly, it would never have been stuffed into such a place. They, to be sure, who committed the cruel act, thought they were secure enough of its never been found out by hiding it there, but you see they were mistaken. The watchful eye of God is over all ; he seldom suffers murder to escape the punishment it merits : and indeed I can scarcely doubt that the discovery of the skeleton is but the forerunner of the discovery of the murderer.’

“The old man and the stranger were standing by a wall, against which the skeleton was placed ; but the latter had hitherto been kept from seeing it, by some women who stood between it and him ; they now drew back, supposing that, like themselves, he would be curious enough to wish to examine it.— Scarcely had they done so, when, just as the old man had finished his last sentence, a violent gust of wind arose, which blew down the skeleton, and it fell plump at the stranger’s feet. He started back, as any one indeed might have done at such an accident, and attempted directly to leave the place ; but some how or other, his foot was entangled by the skeleton, so that he could not move. Well, when he perceived this, he gave a deep groan, and sunk upon the ground. The people hastened to his assistance ; he was lifted up—but it was many minutes ere he shewed any signs of life ; and when he did, it was at first only by dismal sighs. At last opening his eyes, he took the old man’s hand, who helped to support him—



‘ Oh ! my good friend (cried he) your words were but too true ; the discovery of that frightful spectacle but foreruns the discovery of the murderer ; in me you behold that guilty wretch.’— At this there was a general cry, and all praised the wonderful Providence of Heaven.

‘ You shall have (he continued) a full confession of my guilt ; I no longer wish (even if it was possible to do so) to evade the punishment due to it.’

“ As he spoke, he fell into such agonies, that they thought he would have died, and were forced to get him some wine to take.

“ Being a little revived by it, he was seated on the grass, and thus began :—

‘ To the old, as well as the young, my story may be instructive ; it will prove to the former, that their authority over youth should never be too much relaxed ; and to the latter, that those who are disobedient to their parents or guardians, and waste the morning of their life in idleness or vice, may assuredly expect to end its evening in misery.

I was



I was born of reputable parents, in a small town in this province. The comforts they enjoyed, which were sufficient to satisfy humble dispositions, were procured by their own industry, and, with the inheritance of the little property they had acquired, they trusted I would possess a spirit temperately to enjoy, and honestly to increase it; but their over-indulgence marred their wishes. I soon discovered their easiness of temper, and, in consequence of that easiness, grew importunate in my demands—demands which they soon lost the power of refusing; and I became, from their compliance, giddy and dissipated in the extreme. Too late my parents perceived their error, in allowing me such latitude as they had done, and in not checking, at the beginning, the propensities I early shewed to idleness and dissipation. Their remorse, together with the disappointment of their hopes relative to me, terminated their lives (while I was yet in the prime of my youth) and they died within a short period of each other. I felt some little compunction and regret;

gret ; but the first call of pleasure drove them from my heart, and I resumed my former courses. A continuance in them soon dissipated the little property I possessed. I then resolved to abandon my native country, and seek subsistence in another part of the world. This resolution I imparted to a particular friend, a youth about my own age, and, like me, an orphan. Our attachment had commenced at the first dawning of reason, and a kind of infatuation seemed to bind him to me ; he was ever ready to join me in my schemes, and often, latterly, assisted my declining purse. Through my means, his fortune had been considerably injured ; but though his fortune was not wrecked like mine, he now declared he would accompany me to any part of the world I should like to go to ; a declaration I rejoiced to hear, as he had the means of keeping me from hardships I otherwise, from the low state of my finances, expected to undergo. He accordingly gathered the remains of his wealth together, and we set out on foot (the better to  
conceal

conceal the distressed situation in which we left the place of our nativity) for Rochelle, from whence we purposed embarking for the West Indies, thinking that the best place for adventurers.

‘ About sun-set, the first day, we came within sight of this ruined mansion, and feeling extremely tired, we turned into it, and refreshed ourselves with the provisions we carried about us. We thought we could not find a better situation for spending the night in, and we had scarcely determined on doing so, when my companion, more fatigued than I was, fell asleep.

‘ Evil suggestions, which I had not grace to subdue, then rose in my mind. If the remnant of his wealth was mine (I cried), how much sooner could I realize the schemes I have formed for making my fortune. The idea was too tempting to be resisted, and, with the knife, with which but a few moments before he had helped me to bread, I pierced him to the heart; he never opened his eyes; one deep, one deadly groan, was  
all

all that escaped him ; it still sounds in my ears, and ascended to Heaven to call down vengeance on my head.

‘ After I had committed the execrable deed, I searched for a place to hide the body in ; and having discovered a vault, I dragged it thither, and covered the traces of the blood with rubbish. Oh that the mouldering walls had crushed me to atoms, while thus impiously employed ! Yet wretch as I am ! Oh, why do I say so ? Rather let me bless the Power, which mercifully granted me leisure to repent—which perhaps spared me then in order to warn others, by my narration and punishment, from crimes similar to mine.

“ To be brief, my dear auditors, I pursued my original intention, and embarked for the West Indies, where every thing succeeded even beyond my expectations. It seemed as if Heaven allowed me to prosper but to prove how mistaken I was, in supposing wealth alone could give me happiness. Alas ! dreadful mistake, to think any could be enjoyed from a fortune, whose foundation

was

was laid in blood :—with riches, wretchedness, if possible, increased, 'tis now fifteen years since I murdered my friend ; and from that period to this, peace has been a stranger to my breast. Remorse pervaded my soul ; horror pursued my steps, and the blood I had shed continually swam before me.

‘ Having at length secured an ample independence, and being disgusted with the place where I lived, or rather, as is often the case with the wretched, imagining change of scene might alleviate my misery, I resolved on returning to my native country ; but the abode of my youth I was destined never more to behold ; my conscience would not suffer me to remain unconcerned on beholding the skeleton, and thus did Providence, I may say, make me call for justice on myself.’

“ In consequence of his confession (continued Floretta), he was committed to prison, and soon after tried, condemned, and executed on the spot where he had committed the murder. A little time before his death, he deposited a sum of money in the hands of  
a priest,



a priest, for the purpose of having mass said for the soul of his murdered friend, and a monument erected to his memory in our village church, where his bones were buried.

“ Often and often have I seen that monument, upon which, according to his desire, the priest had inscribed the particulars of his strange story, exactly opposite the church-yard ; and at the side of the high-way he was interred himself :—his grave could plainly be distinguished when I was last in that part of the country, though all overgrown with grass and weeds, as was the stone placed at its head, to signify the reason he was denied Christian burial. Many and many a time, particularly after it grew dark, I have taken a long circuit to avoid passing it ; for 'tis confidently said, and believed by our villagers, that his spirit, and that of the unhappy gentleman he murdered, take their nightly rounds about the place, moaning, lamenting, and uttering the most piteous cries. My poor old grandmother, from whom I have repeatedly heard the story, told me



me she was once almost frightened to death, from fancying she had a glimpse of them near the church-yard ; and the servants in the house that was rebuilt, have often been almost scared out of their senses, by the noises they have heard within it.

“ Thus (continued Flóretta) my story proves the truth of what we were saying, namely, that an evil conscience has often occasioned the discovery of foul crimes. It was owing to it that the stranger imagined the falling of the skeleton not an accidental circumstance, but one immediately ordered by Heaven, and from that idea did he betray himself.”

“ True (cried Agatha, who had listened with deep attention, and great delight), 'tis an old saying, and a just one, that a guilty conscience needs no accuser.

“ Lord ! if people were to allow themselves a little time to consider, half the bad actions that are committed would be left undone ; for they would then reflect, that neither riches nor titles can make amends  
for

for that peace of mind which a wicked deed destroys. No person's lot can be truly miserable, who, on retiring to their beds, can lay their hands upon their hearts, and say within themselves, I may go to rest in peace, assured of the protection of Heaven, from never having wilfully injured man, woman, or child. Such a thought as this will support one through many distresses. May it support us at the hour of death!"—"and in the day of judgment!" (cried Madeline, with involuntary fervour, and raising her hands and eyes to Heaven)"—"Amen," rejoined Agatha.

"As one story begets another (continued she), if you have no objection, Mam'selle, I can tell one something to the same purpose of that we have been listening to."

"Objection (repeated Floretta)! Lord! no, to be sure she can't (answering for Madeline); there is nothing, I think, can delight people more than hearing stories; many and many a winter's night I have passed in hearkening to my grandmother's, who had  
such

such a budget of them, there was not a great house for many leagues around us, that she could not tell something wonderful about, and she has frequently sent me to bed shaking with fear."

"Well, Mam'selle (asked Agatha, turning to Madeline), are you of Floretta's mind?"

"Yes," replied Madeline, who saw that Agatha would be dreadfully disappointed, if not permitted to tell one of the wonderful tales in which she abounded.

Breathing astonishment, of witching rhymes,  
And evil spirits ; of the death-bed call  
Of him who robb'd the widow, and devour'd  
The Orphan's portion ; of unquiet souls  
Ris'n from the grave to ease the heavy guilt  
Of deeds in life conceal'd ; of shapes that walk  
At dead of night, and clank their chains, and wave  
The torch of hell around the murderer's bed.

"In the reign of Lewis the Ninth, commonly known by the title of St. Lewis, from the holy war in which he engaged, there  
stood

stood (said Agatha), about a league from the boundaries of this chateau, a noble castle, the ruins of which are still visible upon a fine eminence, scattered over with wood; and I dare say, Mam'selle, in your way to Madame Chatteneufs, you have taken notice of them."—"I have," replied Madeline.

"This Castle, at the period I have mentioned (resumed Agatha) belonged to a nobleman of an ancient family, and very large fortune; but notwithstanding his rank, which should have made him generous, his fortune, which enabled him to do so, and his having only one child to provide for, he was of a mean and miserly disposition, grudging to himself, and all about him, the necessaries of life; and treated his son, a fine noble youth, brave, generous, and accomplished—in short, his reverse in every respect, in such a severe manner, that he determined to leave him, if an opportunity offered for permitting him to do so, without having his real motives known; for though he could not esteem his

his father himself, he yet wished, if possible, to keep him from the censures of the world.

“ The opportunity he desired occurred upon the King’s determining upon a crusade ; for it was natural, you know, that a youth of his prowess should wish to embark in so glorious a cause. He accordingly repaired, without delay, to the royal standard, and bade an adieu to his native country.

“ His only regret, at doing so, was occasioned by his separation from a young lady, whom he had privately made his wife, and by whom he had a son, then some months old. She was an orphan, and the descendant of a good, but reduced family. He saw her at the house of the relation’s, to whose care she had been consigned, and who, not caring to be burdened with her, determined to settle her in a cloister. They did not know each other long, ere a mutual attachment grew between them ; and well knowing it would be vain to solicit his father’s consent, or her relations, for fear of disobliging him, he stole her away, and, after their nuptials,



nuptials, placed her in a small house near his own residence, which he had taken for that purpose.

“ The only person entrusted with the affair was his father’s butler, an old man, who had lived long in the family ; had often dandled him in his infancy, and was, he knew, faithfully attached to him. To the care of this good creature, who respected the lady, and doated on the child, he left his treasures.

“ He had but just reached the Holy Land, when his father died. Poor Peter, who, without authority, could not do any thing, apprized him, as soon as possible, of this event, and requested either his immediate presence, or orders how to act.

• So great was the anxiety of the noble youth, to see his wife and child, and have them publicly acknowledged as such, that without loss of time, he knelt before the King, and entreated his permission to return to his native country, in order to settle his affairs. This the King most graciously



granted : but alack ! he only returned to find a grave within it.

“ Within a league of his castle, he was way-laid and murdered by two ruffians, masked ; and the sad intelligence was conveyed to his expecting family by his faithful squire, then his only attendant, who, in attempting to save his life, received such desperate wounds, that he died in two days after.

“ Peter was greatly grieved ; but, alas ! what was his grief to that of the poor lady’s ; she lost all relish for this life, and in less than a week after her husband’s death, was laid beside him in the grave. In her last moments, as well as in those preceding them, she besought Peter to be a steady friend to her child, and see him, if possible, put into possession of his rights. Peter promised to do all he could, but that all, he feared, would be but little. The certificate of her marriage had been destroyed in a box, with many other valuables, by an accidental fire some months prior to her death ; and Peter  
knew

knew too much of the world to think the gentleman, who was heir to the estate, in case his master left no lawful issue, would take his single testimony for the legitimacy of her child, and thus give up a fortune he much wanted ; being an extravagant spend-thrift, addicted to every vice and folly, and who would for many years have been in the greatest distress, but for the bounty of his poor murdered relation. Well things turned out as Peter thought ; the gentleman came from a distant part of France, where he lived, to take possession, and declared he did not give the smallest credit to there being any other heir than himself ; he did not doubt, he said, the child being his cousin's, but his legitimate one, he was convinced it was not ; and all poor Peter could prevail on him to do, was to allow a small stipend for its support. Peter, with the rest of the servants, was retained, and none of them had reason to complain of their master. For some time, he rendered the castle a scene of constant gaiety ; but suddenly his spirits drooped ;

he shut out company, and appeared to have taken a dislike to all the pleasures he before delighted in ; but though he avoided company, solitude seemed equally irksome to him, and he almost continually had one or other of the domestics in the apartment with him. The sudden alteration in his manner, the involuntary horrors he sometimes betrayed, appeared strange circumstances in the eyes of Peter, and from them he drew an inference that shocked him. Determined to know whether it was, or was not a just one, he devised a scheme, which, when you hear it, you will say was a bold one.

“ He was the domestic his master generally selected to be near him, and, at the close of day, they frequently walked together up and down a great Gothic hall. — One evening, as they were thus engaged, Peter, whom his master allowed to converse familiarly with him, from his long residence in the family, and well-known attachment to it, said to him, with a solemn voice and countenance,

tenance, ‘ Sir, there is something of consequence which I wish to impart to you : last night I had a dream ; indeed I do not know whether I can properly call it one, in which methought my poor young master, disfigured by wounds, and stained with blood, came to me, and told me I should, when I least expected it, have the pleasure of discovering his murderer, and bringing him to condign punishment.’ — Peter paused, and looked steadily at his master, who betrayed the greatest agitation.

“ Was any thing else said to you ? ” demanded he, in a faltering voice.

‘ Yes (replied Peter), I asked him by what means I should discover his murderer, and he told me he would betray himself.

‘ You will (said he) mention my murder before him, and his guilty conscience will make him, if not by words, at least by agitation, declare his crime. Besides, my troubled spirit will be near you at the time, and accelerate the discovery.’

“ Peter’s master now declared he was taken very ill, and must go directly to his chamber. Scarcely had he spoken, when the dreadful creaking of an iron door was heard, and a faint light flashed upon him, from the spiral stair-case of an old tower, that had for centuries been uninhabited, from an idea of its being haunted.

‘ Lord, defend me ! (cried Peter) ; I have the key of the iron door at the top of the tower in my possession, and no human hand could have opened it ; the light, too, from the stair-case is quite a blue flame.’

“ Hark (cried Floretta at this moment, with an affrighted countenance), what noise is that ?”

“ Noise ! (repeated Agatha, with an emotion of fear).

“ Oh ! ’tis only the wind (continued she, listening a minute) ; it often comes in this way against the doors, as if it would burst them open ; but bless me, Mam’selle (looking

ing at Madeline), how deadly pale you are ; I fear sitting up does not agree with you."

The spirits of Madeline, weakened by grief, were indeed affected, in spite of her reason, with a kind of superstitious awe, by the stories of her companions.

" Let us mull some wine (cried Agatha) ; it will do us all good."

" Ay, do (said Floretta), and I will make some toast."

Madeline now said she would step into the Countess's chamber, and try whether she still slept. She accordingly stole into it, and bending over her pillow, had the satisfaction of finding she continued in a tranquil sleep. This somewhat cheered her; and after taking a glass of the mulled wine, she felt the gloom of her spirits pretty well depressed. Agatha then resumed her story.

" Scarcely (said she) had Peter uttered the last word, when his master dropped senseless at



his feet. Peter raised, and with difficulty recovered him. The moment he opened his eyes, he dropped upon his knees, implored the mercy of Heaven, and confessed he was the murderer of his cousin.

“Plunged into difficulties, he said, by his extravagance, which he was ashamed to avow, as soon as ever he heard of his cousin’s expected return from the Holy Land, he laid the plan for destroying him, which succeeded but too well, and in which he was assisted by a servant, whom he afterwards murdered, for fear of his betraying him.

“Peter told him, if he would immediately resign the estate to the lawful heir, he would not give him up to the punishment he merited. This he readily consented to do; and every thing necessary being done, he retired to a monastery, where he soon after died of a broken heart. After his death, this story was divulged by the servant, whose assistance Peter had obtained for carrying into execution the scheme he had contrived  
for

for knowing whether or not his master had murdered his cousin."

The tale concluded, on which Floretta made many comments, a general silence ensued; it was now about the middle of the night, or rather the beginning of the morning, and the storm still raged with unabated violence. Madeline went to a window, and opened a shutter, to see whether the scene without was as dreary as fancy within had represented it to be, and found it, if possible, more so. The faint dawn o'er the western hills was overcast by heavy clouds, and the trees of the wood tumultuously agitated by the blast, which seemed threatening to tear them from the earth.

"How dreadful, how appalling is this hurricane (cried Madeline, as she leant against the window). If it strikes such terror into a heart conscious of no crime, what fears, what horrors must it excite in one burthened with guilt. To such an one the war of the  
H 5 elements

elements must indeed be dreadful, as seeming to declare the anger of an offended God.—Like the Poet, Madeline thought that such a heart would think

——The tempest blew his wrath,  
The thunder was his voice, and the red flash  
His speedy sword of justice.

Chilled by the melancholy prospect, she closed the shutter, and returned to the fire, before which her companions were now slumbering. In deep and pensive meditation, she sat a considerable time with her eyes fixed upon the crackling blaze, when the heavy crash of something falling in the lower part of the Castle, startled not only her, but her companions.

“Holy virgin! (exclaimed Agatha, turning pale), defend us—’tis the armour that has fallen.”

“You had better try (said Madeline, in a faint voice).

“Try (repeated Agatha); Lord, not for the world.”

“Nor I, I am sure (said Floretta) if you could, or would give me a principality for doing so.”

“I will then (cried Madeline, ashamed to propose what she would shrink from herself), I will go and endeavour to discover the occasion of the noise.”

She went softly into the Countess's chamber, to try if she was disturbed by it, and finding her still asleep, she took up a light, and descended (though with trembling limbs, and a palpitating heart) to the great hall, from whence the noise had sounded. The light she held but partially dispersed its awful gloom, and her tremor and palpitation increased, as she proceeded to the extreme end, at which hung the ominous armour. She found this in its usual situation, and she was hastily moving from it, too much depressed and agitated to think of searching elsewhere for the cause of the noise, when a door opposite to her (which led to a suit of rooms that had been appropriated solely to the use of the Count, and since his death,

shut up), slowly opened, and a tall figure clad in black, came forth.

Madeline started behind a pillar ; the conversation of her companions had raised the very spirit of superstition in her breast, and, with eyes almost bursting from their sockets, she now stood immovable, gazing upon the terrifying object that presented itself to her view ; but when she saw it approaching her, which it did, with a slow, but steady step, her faculties returned, and dropping the light, she fled to the stair-case ; but ere she had ascended many steps, she fell, through her extreme haste ; and the surrounding darkness, and the exquisite pain she suffered, in consequence of bending her foot under her at the instant, prevented her from making an immediate effort for rising. She lay for about two minutes in this situation, when a faint light gleaming behind her, made her turn her head with quickness, and she beheld the object of her terror within a step of her. A cold dew instantly burst from her pores, her heart almost died within her, and she covered her face with her hands.

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CHAP. VIII.  


And art thou—of that sacred band ?  
Alas ! for us too soon, tho' rais'd above  
The reach of human pain, above the flight  
Of human joy.

THE well-known accents of Father Bertrand recalled the fainting spirits of Madeline ; never were sounds before so delightful to her ear. She uncovered her face, started up, and exclaimed, “ Gracious Heaven ! is it possible ! do I really behold Father Bertrand ! ”

“ My



“My dear young lady (said the good old man, with his usual mildness), what is the matter;—is our beloved benefactress worse?”

“No, I trust and believe not (replied Madeline); her sleep has been long and tranquil.”

“If she is not worse then—if you did not come to call me to her, what could have brought you to the hall?”

Madeline, as briefly as possible, informed him; and in doing so, notwithstanding she wished to conceal it, in order to avoid the imputation of folly, betrayed the fright he had given her.

The good father was too well acquainted with human nature not to know, that the present hour was an improper one for reasoning with her against the weakness which exposed her to it. He determined, however, from a wish of promoting the happiness of a young creature, which he knew nothing  
would

would so materially injure as superstition, to take another opportunity of admonishing her against it.

He informed her, that his continuing the night in the Castle was owing to the express desire of the Countess; "but instead of going to bed (proceeded he), I procured the key of the library, well knowing, from the violence of the storm, that I could not sleep." He sighed as he spoke, and his eyes were involuntarily raised to Heaven.

Madeline looked at him with pity and reverence.

"Poor Caroline (said she to herself) is now present to his thoughts; Oh! what must have been his excruciating anguish at the time of her death, when even now, though so many years have passed since that event, his regret is so poignant."

"Never

“Never (cried she, addressing him), never again may I hear a storm so tremendous ! I fear we shall have melancholy accounts to-morrow of the mischief it has done.”

“I hope not (replied the Father); he, whose mighty spirit walks upon the careering winds, will, I humbly trust, prevent their fury from being destructive.”

Madeline now enquired whether he heard the noise which had so much alarmed her and her companions. He replied in the affirmative, but said it had come from the gallery instead of the hall, and that he would now go up, and try to discover the cause of it, accompanied by Madeline. He accordingly ascended, and they soon discovered that it had been occasioned by the fall of the Countess's picture.

“Do you now, my child (said the Father), retire, and try to take some repose ; for your spirits have been much agitated. I rejoice to hear that the rest of our noble friend has  
been

been so good ; 'tis a favourable symptom ; may the morning light witness the realization of the hopes it has inspired !”

“ Heaven grant it may !” fervently rejoined Madeline. She then bade the good man farewell, and begged he would, on descending to the hall, try whether the light she had dropped was extinguished.

The moment she re-entered the dressing-room, Agatha and Floretta eagerly enquired if they were right in their conjectures. She assured them they were not, and then informed them of the cause of their alarm.— This excited little less consternation than if she had told them the armour was fallen ;— so prone is superstition to dress up every circumstance in the garb of terror.

The dawn was now peeping through the shutters ; the lights were therefore put out, and Agatha and Floretta then again began to slumber before the fire. They were soon, however, disturbed by a sudden gust of wind, which

which came with such violence against the doors, as almost to burst them open.

“Heaven defend us! (said Agatha), the storm grows worse, instead of better.”

“Hark (cried Madeline, with a wild expression in her countenance, and laying her hand upon the arm of Agatha)—Hark!—there surely was a groan mingled in that blast.”

“No, Mam’selle (said Agatha), ’tis only the howling of the wind.”

“Again! (exclaimed Madeline);—Oh Heavens! (starting from her chair) ’tis the voice of the Countess!”

She rushed into the chamber, followed by her companions. The curtains of the bed were hastily drawn back, and the Countess was discovered in a fit: a scream of mingled terror and anguish burst from Madeline, and sinking on her knees, she clasped the nerveless hands of her friend between her’s.

Agatha

Agatha and Floretta used every effort to recover their lady, and at length succeeded. On opening her eyes, she turned them round with a wild stare, as if forgetting where she was, or by whom surrounded. Her recollection, however, appeared soon to return; her eyes suddenly lost their wildness, and were raised for some minutes to Heaven.— She then looked at Madeline, and spoke, but what she said was unintelligible: she seemed sensible of this herself, by mournfully shaking her head. Gently disengaging one hand from Madeline, she pointed it towards the door, looking earnestly in her face as she did so, as if to say, she wished her to bring some person to her.

“Father Bertrand!” cried Madeline, starting up.

A faint smile from the Countess was an affirmative; and she was flying from the chamber, when she was suddenly stopped by a deep groan.

“Has



“Has she relapsed?” cried she with a trembling voice, and a despairing look, again advancing to the bed.

“Never to recover, I fear,” said Agatha, bursting into tears.

“’Tis too true! (cried Floretta), she is gone for ever.”

Madeline grew sick; she could not weep; she could not speak; she could scarcely breathe; her sight grew dim; her head grew giddy; and the objects that she could discern seemed swimming before her. The grief and consternation of her companions prevented them from noticing her, till they saw her catching at a bed-post for support.—They then directly hastened to her assistance, and supporting her to a chair, opened a window. The keenness of the morning air, together with the water they sprinkled on her face, somewhat revived her, and a shower of tears came to her relief.

Agatha,

Agatha, whom her death-like coldness, and ghastly paleness greatly alarmed, would have led her from the room, but she resisted the effort, and tottering to the bed, threw herself upon it, and bedewed the pale face of her dear, her invaluable benefactress with tears of unutterable, of heart-felt anguish. Agatha now desired Floretta to ring a large bell, which hung in the gallery. This in a few minutes collected all the servants, and they came crowding into the room, preceded by Father Bertrand, and apprized by the sudden alarm of the melancholy event which had happened.

Few scenes could have been more distressing than that now exhibited by the old domestics, as they wept round the bed of their beloved lady, under whose protection they had passed the prime, and trusted to have closed the evening, of their days.

“Oh my friends and fellow-servants! (cried Agatha, whom grief made eloquent), our happiness

happiness in this world is gone for ever ;— but 'tis a comfort to think, that, from the common course of nature, none of us can expect much longer to continue in it."

" My friends (said Father Bertrand, collecting all his spirits to his aid, and wiping away the tear which had bedewed his pale cheek), my friends (looking round him with the most benign compassion), moderate those transports of grief, by patiently acquiescing in the will of the Almighty ; endeavour to deserve a continuance of some of his blessings.

" Peace (continued he, advancing to the foot of the bed, and kneeling before it, while his arms folded upon his breast, and his head gently reclined, seemed to denote that submission to the divine will which he preached to others), peace to the soul of the departed ; and may we all, like her, be prepared for our latter end !"

" Let all (cried Agatha, as he rose from his knees) whose services are not required, now retire from the room."

Father

Father Bertrand approached Madeline, who still lay, with her face covered, upon the bed; he took her hand, and entreated her to rise, but she had neither power to refuse nor to obey. Perceiving her situation, he ordered her to be taken up, and carried into the next room; he was shocked beyond expression at the alteration which grief had effected in her appearance; her cheek and lips had lost all tinge of colour, and her eyes appeared too dim for her to distinguish any object.

Restoratives were administered to her, and by degrees the tears, which extreme agony had suspended, again began flowing, and somewhat relieved her.

Father Bertrand sat by her in silence; he knew the tribute of affection and sorrow must be paid, nor did he attempt to check it, till the first transports of the latter, by indulgence, were a little abated. He then addressed her in the mildest accents of consolation:—

“ Oh,

“ Oh! my daughter (he said), let the assurance of the felicity to which the spirit of your friend has departed, comfort you for her loss ; life at best is but a state of pilgrimage. God, no doubt, to prevent our too great attachment to a state which we must resign, has chequered it with good and evil, so that few, after any long continuance in it, can, if possessed of reason and religion, regret a summons from it. To the Countess it was a happy release ; her virtues had prepared her to meet it with fortitude, and her sorrows with pleasure ; she knew she was about appearing before a merciful Being, who would reward the patience with which she bore those sorrows—sorrows that corroded the springs of life : so far am I permitted to say, in order to try and reconcile you to her loss, but the source of them I am bound to conceal. Endeavour (he proceeded) to compose yourself ; Madame D’Alembert may soon be expected, and it will be some little comfort to the poor mourner to receive your soothing attentions.

tentions. I am now compelled to retire to the convent, but at the close of day I shall return with some of my brother monks to say mass for the soul of the departed. Farewel ! (rising as he spoke) may the blessing of heaven rest upon you, and peace soon revisit your heart !

He had scarcely left the room ere Agatha entered it. " Had you not better lay down Mam'selle (said she, in a voice broken by sobs) ; for my part I can hold up no longer ; as soon as I have given orders about what is to be done I shall go to bed, and I little care if I never rise from it." The melancholy accent in which these words were pronounced, redoubled the tears of Madeline.

" We have lost indeed (cried she) the kindest, the best of friends ; never can we expect again to meet with one like her."

The door now softly opened, and Floretta made her appearance ; she came with a message of condolence from the physician, who had just arrived, to Madeline, and a request to know whether he could in any manner be serviceable to her.



“ No, (replied Madeline, mournfully) he cannot.”

The Notary has accompanied him, (resumed Floretta) and he desired me to tell you that had he imagined the Countess so near her end, he would, notwithstanding the weather, have come hither yesterday.”

“ Alack—(cried Agatha) I grieve he did not; my Lady’s kind intentions towards you will never now be fulfilled.”

The idea of their being frustrated could not, in the present state of Madeline’s mind, excite one sigh. Pale, faint, exhausted, she at last complied with the request of Agatha, and retiring to her chamber, threw herself upon the bed; but not even for an instant did sleep shed oblivion over her sorrows; she found the words of the Poet true, that

He, like the world, his ready visit pays  
Where fortune smiles, the wretched he forsakes,  
Swift on his downy pinions flies from woe,  
And lights on lids unsully’d by a tear.

Rather

Rather fatigued than refreshed by laying down, she arose in about an hour, and opening a window, seated herself by it; for there was a faintness over her which she thought the air might remove. The heaviness of the sky was now dispersed; the sun looked out with refulgent glory, and the winds, whose fury had scattered the lawn with shattered boughs of trees and fragments from the chateau, were hushed into a calm; the trees, still furcharged with rain, displayed a brighter green, "and glittering as they trembled, cheered the day;" while the birds that sprung from amidst them, poured forth the softest notes of melody; but not that melody, not the blessed beams of the sun which it seemed to hail, could touch the sad heart of Madeline with pleasure.

"Ah! (she cried) after such a night as the last, how soon on the morning would my dear benefactress, if she had been spared to us, have gone forth to enquire what mischief was done, and give orders for repairing

it ! Oh ! ye children of poverty and distress—ye, like the unhappy Madeline, have lost a mother.”

Madeline knew not the strength or tenderness of her attachment to the Countess till she was deprived of her ; in losing her, she lost all hope of comfort ; for to none, as to her, could she impart the fears, the wishes, the expectations, which had so long, and still at times, agitated her heart ; and which, by being concealed, she knew would fatally corrode its peace. Yet not for the tenderness which had poured balm upon its sorrows, not for the counsel which had regulated its impulses, not for the wisdom which had guarded its inexperience, did she lament alone ; exclusive of all consideration for herself she bitterly wept the death of her benefactress, and imagined, was she but alive again, her own tranquillity would in some degree be restored, though the next moment she should be transported to an immeasurable distance from her.

The

The circumstances which occasioned her death, heightened the grief of Madeline for it, and the flattering hopes she had conceived of her amendment, from her uninterrupted rest, also aggravated her feelings.

She continued alone a considerable time; at length Agatha entered with some coffee. "I see Mam'selle, (cried she) that like me you could not rest; I might indeed as well have staid up as gone to bed."

"No, (said Madeline, looking mournfully in her face) I could not rest."

"Pray Mam'selle, (cried Agatha, as she laid the coffee on a little table before her) pray Mam'selle, do not take on so badly; though you have lost a good friend, you have still a kind father to love and to protect you; not like me, who in losing my lady, have lost my only friend. Ah, Mam'selle! (dropping into a chair opposite Madeline) 'tis a grievous thing for a poor old soul like me, to be neglected and forlorn."

“ You will never be deserted or forlorn, I trust, and believe (cried Madeline); the noble daughter of your dear departed lady will never, I am convinced, desert any one that she loved.”

“ She is a noble lady, indeed (said Agatha) but——”

“ But what ?” eagerly interrogated Madeline, on her suddenly pausing.

“ Nothing, Mam’selle, replied Agatha, sighing; (then as if to change the discourse) do pray, Mam’selle (she continued) try and eat some breakfast; indeed, if you do not take more care of yourself, than you at present seem inclined to do, you will probably bring on a fit of sickness; and what a grievous thing would it be for my poor young lady on arriving, to find, not only her mother dead, but you unable to give her any comfort.”

“ Alas! (said Madeline) whether well or ill, I fear I shall be equally unable to give her comfort.—Agatha again pressed her to  
take



take some breakfast, but grief had destroyed all inclination for doing so, and the house-keeper soon left her to her melancholy meditations.—At the usual dinner hour they were again interrupted by the re-entrance of Agatha, who came to entreat her to descend to the dinner parlour. “Do, pray do, dear Mam’selle (she said); if you eat nothing, it will even do you good to stir a little.”

Madeline had felt so forlorn whilst by herself, that she did not refuse this entreaty, and accordingly went down stairs; but when she entered the parlour—that parlour where she had first been welcomed to the chateau—where she had been embraced as the adopted child of the Countess—where she had passed with her so many happy hours, the composure she tried to assume vanished; she involuntarily started back, and bursting into tears, would have returned to her chamber, had not Agatha prevented her; the pathetic entreaties of the faithful creature at length prevailed



prevailed on Madeline to sit down to the table, where she also insisted on Agatha's seating herself; but she could not eat—she could only weep.

The sorrowful looks of the servants the—solemn stillness which reigned throughout the chateau, so different from its former cheerfulness, augmented her tears. Agatha judged of Madeline by herself, and thinking those tears would be a relief to her overcharged heart, she did not attempt to stop them. They sat together till the close of day, when Agatha entreated her to retire to her chamber, and try and take that rest which she had been so long deprived of, and so materially wanted.

Madeline was convinced she could not sleep; but she did not hesitate to return to her chamber, at the door of which Agatha left her. Scarcely had she entered it, ere she resolved on going to her benefactress's, and indulging her sorrow by weeping over  
her

her remains. She accordingly proceeded thither ; but when she reached the door, she paused, and shuddered at the solemn scene before her.

The chamber was hung with black, and a black velvet pall was thrown across the bed, which formed a melancholy contrast to the rich crimson curtains. Before the bed several rows of large wax tapers burned, and cast a gleam upon the face of the Countess that increased its ghastliness. Awe-struck, Madeline wanted resolution to enter ; and it might perhaps have been many minutes ere she could have summoned sufficient for that purpose, had she not beheld Agatha and Floretta sitting in a remote corner of the room. She then, with light and trembling steps, approached the bed. The moment she cast her eyes upon the inanimate features of her friend, the composure, which sudden awe had inspired, gave way to her affliction.

“ Is she gone ? (she cried, looking round her with an eye of wildness, as if forgetting

the scene of the morning—as if doubting the reality of what she saw; Oh! too surely—too surely she is (she continued, wringing her hands together); and who, in this wide world, can supply her loss to Madeline? Oh, most excellent of women! (kneeling beside the bed, while tears streamed in torrents down her cheeks); Thou—friend to the friendless—’tis now I feel the full extremity of grief; the sorrow, which I so lately deemed excruciating, seems light, seems trivial, in comparison of that which I now feel. Had you died (she went on, after a momentary pause, and as if the dull cold ear of death could have heard her pathetic lamentations), had you died according to the common course of nature, though my loss would have been equally great, my grief, I think, would not have been so poignant. To die by such horrible means (she added, with a kind of scream in her voice, and starting up as if she saw that very moment the poignard of the assassin pointed at her own breast); to die by such horrible means, is what overpowers me.

me. Oh why—why did I not follow you the fatal night you went to the chapel?”

“ Dear Mam’felle (said Agatha, rising and approaching her), try to compose yourself; no grief, no lamentations can recal my blessed lady.”

“ Oh ! Agatha (cried Madeline), ’tis not a common friend ; ’tis a mother I lament ;—she was the only person from whom I ever experienced the tenderness of one. Do you not wonder (she continued, grasping the arm of Agatha) how any one could be so wicked as to injure such a woman—a woman who never, I am confident, in the whole course of her life, injured a mortal ; whose hand was as liberal as her heart, and whose pity relieved, even when her reason condemned the sufferer ? Would you not have thought, Agatha (again bending o’er the bed, from which she had a little retreated) that the innocence of that countenance might have disarmed the rage of a savage ? What a smile is there still upon it ; it seems to declare the happi-

ness which is enjoyed by the spirit that once animated it !”

“ My dear young lady (said Agatha, in a low voice), recollect yourself;—remember the promise you gave my lady in the chapel, never to mention or allude, by any means whatsoever, to the transaction that happened there.”

“ I thank you, Agatha (cried Madeline), for awakening me to recollection; never should I have forgiven myself, had I broken my promise. I will in future endeavour to have more command over my feelings.” She still, however, remained by the bed, holding the arm of Agatha.

“ And to this cold, this ghastly, this inanimate state, must we all, one day come !” she cried.

“ Yes (replied a hollow voice behind her, the voice of Father Bertrand, who, unperceived, had entered some minutes before, accompanied by some of his brother monks, for the purpose of saying mass for the soul of the departed); the crime of disobedience has



doomed us to that state, and the paths of fame and fortune lead but to the coffin and the grave."

He now proceeded to inform Madeline of the purpose for which he had entered.

"If (cried he) you think you can, without interrupting, attend to our solemn rites, and join in our orisons, remain; if not, retire to your chamber."

"I do think I can (replied Madeline); I also think, that, by staying, my mind will be composed."

Some of the most ancient of the domestics now entered, and the sacred service was begun, and ere concluded, the turbulence of Madeline's grief was abated: when over, Father Bertrand, who was tenderly interested about her, insisted on her retiring to her chamber, and gave her his benediction as she withdrew.

Overcome



Overcome by fatigue, both of body and mind, she repaired to bed; but the sleep into which she sunk was broken and disturbed by frightful visions, and she arose pale and unrefreshed, at the first dawn of day, to seek some of her fellow-partners in affliction. To describe her feelings this day would be but to recapitulate those of the preceding one. They were now, as they were then, alternately perturbed, alternately calm; and Father Bertrand, whose sympathy and counsel alone caused that calm, was convinced time only could restore them to their wonted state. She this day performed the painful task of acquainting her father with the melancholy loss they had sustained, which she did as follows:—

TO M. CLERMONT.

“WHERE shall I find words to soften the melancholy tidings I have to communicate. Oh! my father, vainly would I try for expressions to do so; no language, no preparation

ration I could use would mitigate them to you ; but what I find it impossible to do, your own reason and religion will, I trust, perform.

“ Heaven has been pleased to recal our estimable friend, my dear and lamented benefactress, to itself. The dawn of yesterday saw the seal of death impressed upon those eyes which scarcely ever opened but to cheer her family, or witness some good deeds of her own performing. So short was her illness, so unexpected her dissolution, that I feel myself at times quite bewildered by the shock, and tempted to think, that what has lately happened is but the dream of my own disordered imagination.

“ Is she dead ? I repeatedly ask myself ;— the Countess de Merville dead ? she whom but a few days ago I beheld so apparently well and happy ? Alas ! the gloom of every surrounding object gives a fatal affirmative to those self-questions.

“ I wander to her favourite apartments, as if to seek for her, who never more will  
re-enter

re-enter them; and start back, chilled and affrighted by their neglect and desertion, as if it was unexpected. Oh, my father, what a change has a few days produced! The sound of social mirth no longer enlivens the Castle; a death-like stillness reigns throughout it, scarcely ever interrupted but by the wind sighing through its long galleries, as if in unison with the grief of its inhabitants.

“ Things without appear almost as dreary as they do within. The fury of a late storm has scattered the lawn with broken boughs and fragments from the chateau, and thus given the place an appearance of desolation saddening in the extreme. The poor peasants, too, who are employed within the wood, appear (to me at least) quite altered. They seem to pursue their labours with reluctance, and, often suspending them, look towards the Castle with a melancholy air, as if to say the comforts that cheered their toils, and supported their strength, died with its honoured and lamented owner.

Their

Their loss, indeed, is unspeakable ;—not content with relieving the objects chance threw in her way, she herself explored the recesses of poverty, and, like a ministering angel from heaven, dispensed charity and compassion wherever she went. She delighted too in contriving little pastimes which should give relaxation to labour, and smiled to see the rough brow of industry smoothed by pleasure, and the peasants sporting on the sod which they had cultivated.

This morning, as I stood at an upper window, which overlooked the old trees that waved before it, and saw the distant fields already beginning to wear the yellow tinge of Autumn ; I recollected the manner in which she had planned to celebrate the conclusion of the ensuing harvest: she was to have given a feast and a dance upon the lawn to all her tenants, and I was to have mixed in the latter with the peasant girls. Alas ! little did I think, when she spoke to me about it, that, ere the period destined  
for

for it, she would be laid within the narrow house of clay.

“To quit this place directly, to return to you, my dear father, and mingle those tears with your’s, which should embalm her memory, would be my wish, had she not requested, almost in her last moments, that I might continue here to receive Madame D’Alembert, who is shortly expected, and also to give her my company while she staid, or whenever she came to the chateau *alone*—a request which the gratitude of your heart will not, I am convinced, permit me to disobey;—yet, alas! little benefit can she derive from my society. How can I comfort—how try to reconcile her to a loss which I feel myself nothing earthly can supply to me? But, perhaps, she may derive a melancholy pleasure from the company of a person who is a real mourner; I feel myself, that those of the Countess’s family who are the most afflicted, are those to whom I am the most attached.

“It



“ It will, I am sure, impart to you the same satisfaction it has done to me, to know that, to the last, my beloved, my estimable benefactress, bestowed upon me those proofs of affection and esteem, which long since excited a gratitude in my heart, death or the loss of reason only can remove. The very morning on which she died so unexpectedly, her generous intentions towards me were to have been put into execution; that they were unfulfilled will, I am confident, be to you, as to me, a small source of regret, compared to that which we feel for her death. I am not now worse with respect to fortune than when she took me under her protection: the luxuries I enjoyed with her have not vitiated my taste, or rendered me unable to support with contentment the humble situation I am destined to. No, my dear father, her lessons and my affection for you guarded me against such perversion of disposition; and as I will still strive to deserve the protection of heaven, so I trust I shall obtain it, and never feel the pressure of  
worldly



worldly want. Do not suffer any apprehensions about my health to disturb your mind ; my body has not sympathized as much as you might have supposed with my mind ; I am not ill, indeed, though a little fatigued ; but there is nothing now (alas ! I sigh as I say so) to prevent my taking repose.

“ I now regret more than ever the departure of my good friends, Madame Chatteneuf and her daughter ; had they continued at V——, I am sure, on the first intimation of the melancholy event which has happened, they would have flown to the castle ; and their society, I think, would a little have alleviated my feelings. When I sat down, I did not imagine I could have written above a few lines ; but now I find that in writing to, as well as in conversing with, a beloved friend, one is insensibly drawn on, and comforted by being so.

“ I have now, however, written almost to the extent of my paper ; and as I have nothing

thing of sufficient consequence to say to make me begin a new sheet, I shall bid you, my dearest father, farewell. Write as soon as possible, I entreat you; if you say (which I know you will not, except it is the case) that you are well, and somewhat composed after our great loss, you will give ease to my heart.

“I shall receive pleasure from hearing that our faithful Jaqueline, and all our good neighbours, are well: to all who may be so kind as to inquire after me, present my best wishes. Once more farewell! and believe me

“Your truly dutiful and affectionate child,  
“MADELINE CLERMONT.”

CHAP.

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CHAP. IX.  


It is the wretch's comfort still to have  
Some small reserve of near and inward woe—  
Some unsuspected hoard of darling grief,  
Which they, unseen, may wail, and weep, and mourn.

CONGREVE.

IN her letter to her father, Madeline carefully guarded against dropping any hint of the event which had accelerated the Countess's death, well knowing that, if she gave the most distant intimation of it, she should prompt inquiries from him, which it would be difficult for her to evade. The news of the Countess's decease soon spread throughout the neighbourhood, and several of her acquaintance

acquaintance sent to the castle to learn the particulars of it; how Mademoiselle Clermont was, and whether Madame D'Alembert was expected?

The respect of the servants to the commands of their lady did not expire with her; and, in conformity to the last she had issued, they answered the inquiries concerning the cause of her death, by saying that it was owing to a severe cold.

A dead calm now reigned throughout the castle; the domestics had nothing to do but to lament, and Madeline passed her time in wandering about the castle, like a ghost round the scene of its former happiness, or in watching by the pale remains of her friend, alternately wishing, alternately fearing the arrival of Madame D'Alembert. Ere she came, Father Bertrand determined to have the body of the Countess secured within its coffin, trusting by this measure to conceal for ever the injury it had suffered; convinced,

convinced, from the strong affection Madame D'Alembert bore her mother, that to let her know the real cause of her death, would be upon the "quarry of that murdered deer," to add the death of her.

Eight days elapsed without any tidings of Madame D'Alembert; and before their expiration, the remains of the Countess were consigned to the coffin, and hid for ever from every mortal eye. At the end of that period, a messenger came post one morning to the castle to announce the near approach of Madame D'Alembert, who came, he said, merely attended by a few domestics. Madeline was astonished to hear she was unaccompanied by Monsieur D'Alembert; but Agatha, to whom she expressed that astonishment, replied, that Monsieur was of a gay disposition, and did not, she supposed, chuse to come to the castle till the grief of his lady had a little abated.

" But

"But who (cried Madeline) so able to support her under the pressure of that grief as an affectionate husband."

Agatha shook her head, but did not answer; and Madeline descended to the hall (from the dressing-room of her departed friend, where she had been sitting) to receive Madame D'Alembert, whose carriage at that instant was heard. In the hall Madeline found Father Bertrand and most of the servants assembled, whom the good priest earnestly besought to command their feelings, in order, if possible, to prevent letting Madame D'Alembert know the melancholy event which had happened, until a little prepared for it.

In a few minutes Madame D'Alembert entered, leaning on her woman—a female figure so interesting Madeline had never before seen. To that dignity which excites involuntary respect, she united that light elegance, that harmony of form, which inspires the beholder with mingled pleasure



and admiration ; she seemed not yet to have attained the prime of her days, and though the rose upon her cheek was pale, and the lustre of her fine blue eyes was fled, her countenance still retained an expression so animated, that language was scarcely necessary to develope her feelings.

She advanced to the middle of the hall ; then paused, as if involuntarily, and casting a look around at the old domestics who were ranged on each side, exclaimed, in a tremulous voice, “ Am I come too late ? Have I arrived in time to receive the last blessing of my mother ? ” — The servants, instead of answering, hung their heads in mournful silence. Madeline, who had hitherto stood at a distance, pale and trembling, now stepped forward, followed by Father Bertrand ; but the moment she had reached Madame D’Alembert, the fortitude she had struggled to assume forsook her ; and dropping on her knees, she clasped her arms about her, and burst into tears.

“ I see

"I see (said Madame D'Alembert, in the hollow voice of despair, and raising her hands towards heaven) I see that all is over—she is gone, and it is a stroke too heavy for me to bear."

She tottered, and would have fallen, had not some of the attendants timely caught her; they conveyed her into an adjoining apartment, but it was many minutes ere she shewed any signs of returning sense. When recovered, instead of heeding Father Bertrand, who hung over her, like the delegate of heaven, to administer compassion, instead of regarding Madeline, who knelt beside her, and whose tears evinced her sympathy in her distress, or the domestics who surrounded her with looks of love and pity: she wildly started up, and demanded whether they had yet interred her mother. When answered in the negative, she insisted on going to her chamber: any opposition Father Bertrand was convinced, would

be not only fruitless, but an aggravation of her grief.

He knew the violence of sorrow must, like that of the mountain torrent, have way, ere it can subside. Followed by him and Madeline, she ascended to the chamber, but when she reached the door, she stopped, or rather shrunk back, from a sensation of horror at only beholding the coffin, before which rows of tapers burned, every ray of day-light being excluded. In speechless agonies she leaned a minute upon the shoulders of Madeline, then raising her head, she looked at Father Bertrand ; “ had you the cruelty (she cried) to intend I never more should behold my mother ?—never ! never, will I acquiesce in such an intention. I command ! (advancing into the room) I insist ! nay, I entreat ! (she continued, and tears, the first she had shed, began to steal down her cheeks) that the coffin may be opened ; cold and inanimate as is the form it contains, it will sooth my sad heart once more to behold it. Oh, suffer the  
the

the eyes of a child again to gaze upon an idolized parent ! Oh let her tears of unutterable sorrow be shed over the dear, the lamented cause of them !”

“ Impossible ! impossible ! (said Father Bertrand) ; the remains of my honoured friend must not be disturbed.”

Madame D'Alembert, with a distracted air, now flung back the pall which was thrown over the coffin, as if she hoped herself to effect what she wished ; but when the ghastly head of death, curiously engraved upon the lid, with the name and age of her parent, met her eye, she shivered, groaned, and sinking upon it, fainted away. They seized this opportunity to convey her to her chamber, where she was undressed and put to bed, which the female attendants declared was the properest place for her, as she had never stopped to rest from the commencement of her journey.

Father Bertrand now determined that the funeral of the Countess should take place that night, well knowing that, while her remains continued in the house, the feelings of her daughter would not subside, and accordingly issued the necessary orders for that purpose. Madeline staid by the bedside of Madame D'Alembert till the hour fixed on for the removal of the body, though, like every other person, she was totally unnoticed by her: the weakness she had been seized with, rendering her as unable, as from affliction she was unwilling to converse with any one. An express was sent for the surgeon who had attended the Countess, and he quieted the apprehensions of the family about her, by saying, that he trusted attention and time would restore her to her usual state of health. Madeline continued by her, as I have already said, till the hour for the funeral drew nigh; she then resigned her seat to Madame D'Alembert's woman, and descended to the hall, which was again lit up with all its usual splendour; but  
alas!

alas ! how melancholy a scene did that light now display ! in the centre lay the coffin, furrounded by a numerous body of monks from the neighbouring monastery, and the weeping domestics.

Madeline leant, weeping, against a distant pillar, nor had power to move till the procession began ; she then took a long mourning veil from Agatha, which she, knowing her intention of following the remains of her lady to the grave, had brought for her as soon as she entered the hall, and wrapping it round her, followed with the house-keeper.

The solemn *requiem* chaunted by the monks, as they preceded the body, the glimmering light of the torches, carried by the servants, which as it fell in partial directions upon the old trees that canopied the garden walk through which they past to the valley, produced a thousand quivering and grotesque shadows ; the melancholy notes of



the birds, who, deceived by the light, started from their nests, and the low murmurs of the wind amongst the branches, altogether produced an effect upon Madeline that wrought her feelings up to agony.

Yet was that agony, if possible, encreased when she entered the valley;—horror then seized her soul; and she shuddered as she thought she might, at that very moment perhaps, be treading in the steps of the Countess's murderers. The chapel was lighted up, but the light which gleamed from its windows, by rendering the decay and desolation of the building more conspicuous, served rather to increase than diminish its horrors; from its shattered towers the owls now hooted, and the ravens croaked amidst the surrounding trees, as if singing their nightly song of death, o'er the mouldering bodies which lay beneath them.

Father Bertrand met the procession as it entered the chapel; calmness and resignation in his look, but a more than usual paleness upon

upon his cheek, on which Madeline also thought she could discover the traces of a tear. After meeting, he turned, and preceded the body to the grave, which was directly before the altar, and near those of the Count and his two sons. Madeline's heart felt bursting, and it was with difficulty she could prevent herself from breaking into lamentations ; but when the solemn service begun—when she saw the coffin raised—when she saw it, by degrees, lowering into its last receptacle, she could no longer command herself, and a deep groan burst from her.—Father Bertrand paused in the sentence he was uttering over the body, and looked steadily at her ; she instantly recollected herself, drew her veil entirely over her face, and buried her sobs in her bosom. He would then have proceeded, but as he attempted to speak, his voice faltered, the muscles of his face began to work, and a tear dropped from him into the grave of his benefactress ; the weakness, however, which had overcome him was but momentary, and he re-

sumed and finished the service with his usual steadiness ; a solemn mass was then again said for the soul of the departed, after which Father Bertrand pronounced a short and pathetic eulogium on her:—" The loss, my friends (said he, as he concluded it) which you have sustained by the death of this truly good woman, is indeed great ; but man is born to suffer, and continually liable to such deprivations as you have experienced ; murmur not therefore at the common lot, but, by patient resignation to the will of the Almighty, strive to deserve a continuance of your remaining blessings : instead of quitting this place with a vain sorrow, quit it with a noble resolution to perform your allotted parts, and to pursue, as far as lies in your power, the example of your lamented benefactress. So may you hope, at the last day, to ascend with her to life immortal."

The lights in the chapel, and the torches were now extinguished, and the monks repaired

paired immediately from it to their convent, and Madeline and the servants returned to the castle. Agatha cried bitterly all the way back; “ ’t was a grievous thing (she said to Madeline) to see the death of one’s best, one’s only friend; little did I imagine (she said) that I should ever have beheld the funeral of my lady—I who, when she was a nice prattling little girl, have often and often carried her about in my arms.”

The moment Madeline re-entered the castle, she retired to her chamber, to give vent to that grief, which by being so long suppressed, had almost swelled her heart to bursting. When somewhat relieved by the tears she shed, she knelt down and implored heaven to strengthen her fortitude, that she might be enabled, not only to submit with patience to its divine will, but to pay proper attentions to the daughter of her lamented friend. “Regard not! (she cried with fervour) Oh, regard not! thou, from whom misery and

happiness alike proceed, with any degree of displeasure, the sorrow of a weak creature, impressed with the sad idea of the world's being unable to make her any recompence for what she has lost."

In a short time she was sufficiently composed to be able to repair to the chamber of Madame D'Alembert, where she determined to pass the night. During that night, Madame D'Alembert continued almost in a state of insensibility, but on the morrow she appeared better, and again spoke. She asked, whether the interment of her mother had taken place? Father Bertrand desired, if such a question was asked, that he should be sent for to answer it, and for that purpose remained in the house; he was now called, and without hesitation informed her of the truth. The violence of her grief seemed renewed at this, and she reproached him with cruelty in not deferring the funeral till she was able to have attended it. He bore her reproaches with patience, with composure, and seized the  
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the first interval of silence to reason with her.

“ For what purpose (cried he) would the interment have been delayed; merely to feed your grief, and continue your family in an unsettled state. Prove your affection to your departed parent, by striving to adhere to the precepts she always gave, to the example she always set you; with a sensibility as exquisite as your's, recall to mind the fortitude with which she bore the death of an idolized husband and two lovely sons, the darlings of her heart, the expected supporters of her noble house: instead of sinking into the supineness of sorrow, instead of withdrawing her cares from life, because that life had lost its brightest charms, she exerted herself to fulfil its incumbent duties; let the remembrance of those exertions inspire you to make similar ones; let it raise you from the bed of languor, let it rouse you from the torpor of affliction, let it animate you to perform your proper part, by tracing  
her



her steps ; by doing as she has done, you will more truly prove your love, your reverence for her, than by passing years in fruitless lamentations over her tomb. Like her then, I again repeat, exert yourself ; let the smile of your countenance again gladden the hearts of your friends, and your ear be again open to the voice of cheerfulness."

" She set me a glorious example indeed, (said Madame D'Alembert, on whom the language of the venerable man appeared to have made a deep impressiion) ; and in future I will strive to follow it."

" Do, (cried Father Bertrand) if you wish to retain your present blessings."

" My blessings !" repeated she mournfully.

" Yes, (resumed he) the many blessings you still possess."—Madame D'Alembert sighed deeply at those words, and shook her head with an air that seemed to imply a doubt of what he asserted.

" Amongst the least of these blessings  
(continued

(continued he, glancing at Madeline who sat beside the bed) I shall not rank the friend who now sighs to be presented to you."

"You would be wrong, I am sure, if you did," said Madame D'Alembert, raising herself a little upon her pillow, and extending her white hand, as if to receive Madeline's. Father Bertrand took it, and instantly put it into her's.—"You have both (said he, in a softened voice) lost a mother; be ye therefore as sisters to each other, a mutual comfort and support."

"I have long (cried Madame D'Alembert, turning her soft blue eyes on Madeline, and pressing her hand between her's) been prepared to love and to admire you; and she who prepared me to do so, I hoped would have introduced us to each other; but that hope, like many others, was indulged but to be disappointed." Madeline knelt down, and pressed her hand to her lips; Madame D'Alembert gently disengaged it, and throwing  
ing

ing her arm round her neck, clasped her to a heart, whose strong emotions, for a few moments, overpowered her utterance. "Believe me (she cried, as soon as she had recovered her voice) when I declare, that the chief pleasure I look forward to, is that which I shall receive from your society; she who was beloved by my mother, and who loved her, must on these accounts, even if not possessed of half your powers of pleasing, be dear and precious to me; with the truest gratitude I now thank you for all your kind attentions to her."

"Ah Madam! (said Madeline, melting into tears) you surely must be ignorant of my great obligations to her, or you never could speak to me in this manner; did you know them, you would certainly think as I do, that I never did, never could do any thing adequate to the gratitude they excited; she was the only person from whom I ever received the tenderness of a mother, and as daughters must, I imagine, love their mothers, I loved her."

By

By degrees Madame D'Alembert grew composed, and the conversation then turned upon her deep regret at not arriving in time to behold her mother;—from Madeline, who, she understood, had attended her in her last moments, she entreated to hear the particulars of the disorder which had terminated so fatally. Father Bertrand, who had seated himself at the foot of the bed, now interposed his authority; he knew it would scarcely be possible for Madeline, if she complied with this entreaty, to avoid giving a too faithful narrative, and he therefore declared, that except she and Madame D'Alembert promised to converse no longer on the melancholy subject, they should be separated. “Why (said he, to the latter) do you feed your own grief, and augment her's, by dwelling on it?”

“I promise what you desire, (cried Madame D'Alembert) but Oh! let me be indulged by hearing, whether in her last moments my mother remembered her unhappy Viola!

“Remem-

“ Remembered ! (repeated Madeline emphatically) Oh, Madam ! after heaven you were her first consideration.” She then, as far as it concerned Madame D’Alembert, related the conversation which had passed between the Countess and her the evening preceding her death.

“ You will be my friend, my consoler then ! (exclaimed Madame D’Alembert, from whom the relation drew floods of tears, extending her hand to Madeline as she spoke) ; I open my heart to receive your consolations ; my mother wished me to do so, and as I perform what she wished, so do I hope that the blessing she left me, may draw another down.”—Madeline sighed, and laid her face upon the hand she held, to conceal the feelings, which, for a few minutes stopped her utterance ; fervently, though silently, she prayed for the fortitude which she now wanted, to perform the task enjoined her by her lamented friend. Yet, alas ! she said to herself, as she had done in her letter to her father,



father, how can I give to others that consolation which I want myself? Her evident inability to do so, rendered her, perhaps, a more soothing companion to Madame D'Alembert, than if the case had been reversed; it proved her deep and poignant sorrow more than any words could have done; and nothing perhaps attaches the heart of a mourner so soon, so truly, as a keen participation in its griefs. Madame D'Alembert eagerly enquired, whether she would not continue with her while she herself remained at the chateau? and whether she would not always accompany her to it, whenever she visited it alone? Madeline said, she believed she might promise to do so, as she was pretty certain her father would never refuse a request made by his honoured and lamented friend, or her daughter.

“How long Madam, (asked Father Bertrand), do you propose staying at the chateau?”

“About two months, (replied Madame D'Alembert); I shall then be obliged to return



turn to Paris, where Monsieur D'Alembert proposes spending the winter."

"And how soon do you expect him here?" still interrogated Bertrand.

"I do not expect him at all, (answered Madame D'Alembert); he told me, just before we parted, that he was convinced some particular business, which prevented his accompanying me at the present melancholy juncture, would not be finished in time to permit him to follow me."

In two months then, thought Madeline, I shall be restored to the arms of my father; ah! how many distressing scenes have I gone through since I left them!

Father Bertrand now withdrew, but Madeline continued the remainder of the day with her friend, who, though unable at times to converse with her, seemed to derive pleasure from even looking at her. The following day, the exertions which Father  
Bertrand

Bertrand had animated her to make, enabled her to rise; and in two days more, the gentleman who attended her took his leave, declaring that time was the only physician whose aid she now required; but though health returned, cheerfulness still continued absent, nor had it more completely forsaken her breast than it had that of Madeline's.

The death of her benefactress, together with the disappointment she had experienced prior to it, left an impression of sadness upon her mind which she could not conquer;—had her efforts for doing so been aided by any external circumstance, they might perhaps, in some degree, have been successful; but her present companion and abode were gloomy in the extreme, and of themselves sufficient to have lowered even animated spirits.

Madame D'Alembert declined seeing any company; she received no visits but from

Father Bertrand ; and in answer to the compliments of condolence which she received from the neighbouring families, and which they anxiously wished to pay in person, she declared her utter inability of seeing them at present.

No more the feast of mirth and hospitality was spread within the hall of the château—no more its lofty roof re-echoed sounds of melody—no more the peasants danced upon the lawn, while Benevolence sat by in the form of the Countess, and smiled upon their sports. Solitude encompassed, and silence reigned within it ; and the old domestics, whose grief for their lady knew no diminution, scrupled not to say, that the glory, the happiness of her house had, with her, forsaken it for ever.

So congenial was its gloom to the present feelings of Madame D'Alembert, that she never talked of quitting it without the deepest

deepest regret ; exclusive of the above consideration, she was also attached to it from its having been the favourite residence of her parents, the place where the blossoms of her youth had blown. Here she wished to pass the remainder of her days—here, where she could be free from that restraint—that state—those tiresome ceremonies, which in a public situation the etiquette of the world obliged her to observe. Like the poet, she might have said,

“ This shadewing desert, unfrequented woods,  
I better brook than flourishing peopl'd towns.  
Here I can sit alone, unseen of any,  
And to the nightingale's complaining notes  
Tune my distresses, and record my woes.”

From words which sometimes dropped from Madame D'Alembert, Madeline was more than once led to imagine, that besides the death of her mother, she had another cause for sorrow ; but whenever she reflected on her situation, that idea vanished, and she wondered

wondered how she could for a moment have harboured it ; knowing, as she did, that Madame D'Alembert possessed those blessings, which in general are supposed to render life estimable—the affections of the man of her choice (for such Madeline always understood M. D'Alembert to be), friends who adored her, and even a superabundance of riches.

Those attentions, which pity for the afflicted Viola, and reverence for the commands of her benefactress, first prompted her to pay, Madeline now continued from affection.

Madame D'Alembert was a woman, whose temper and disposition, upon an intimacy, captivated the heart, as much as her beauty and elegance, at first sight, charmed the eye : besides, she treated Madeline exactly as a tender sister would have done, ordered the same mourning for her as for herself,



herself, nor suffered the servants to make any distinction between them.

In the course of the conversation Madeline discovered that Madame D'Alembert knew nothing of her or her father prior to her introduction at the chateau ; and she felt from this circumstance more firmly convinced than ever that the private history of her father must be dreadful, when the Countess would not impart it even to her daughter.

A month elapsed without Madame D'Alembert's solitude being in the least interrupted, during which she and Madeline paid many visits to the grave of the Countess, which the latter could never approach without shuddering.

At the expiration of that period, as they sat at breakfast one morning, a letter was brought to Madame D'Alembert by her



woman ; who, as she put it into her hands, said, “ From my master, Madam.”

Her Lady turned pale at those words, and desiring her to retire, broke the seal with a trembling hand.

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